

REVIEWS BY  
LIONEL JOHNSON

REVIEWS & CRITICAL  
PAPERS. By LIONEL JOHNSON  
EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
ROBERT SHAFER



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TO

R. T. S.



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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

LIONEL JOHNSON'S critical writings can hardly find a place amongst our greatest criticism; and yet, judged by the severest standards, they rank high, having a permanent value. Their value might have been greater, one supposes, had Johnson been given the necessary time for polishing and welding his thoughts about literary art, or his judgments upon books as they came to him from the press. Born in 1867, he died in the middle of his thirty-sixth year in 1902, as result of an accident, when he had just recovered from a year's painful illness. He had, then, about ten years for his work, after he came down to London from New College, Oxford. A part of this time went into the three books he published: an early series of essays on *The Art of Thomas Hardy*, and two volumes of verse. These poems, the result of always careful, sometimes even painful, workmanship in the expression of real emotions, have a severe, enduring charm, though they are limited in range. They have found with the years an increasing audience, so that the original editions have become hard to obtain, and a new collected edition was published in 1915.

But our present concern is with Johnson's prose—with the reviews, contributed to London periodicals, which were his remaining literary accomplishment. The formal article or the "literary essay" he wrote hardly at all. The far greater portion of his work consisted of comparatively short reviews of new books,

written for such periodical publications as *The Outlook*, *The Spectator*, *The Academy*, *The National Observer*, *The Speaker*, *The Pall Mall Gazette* and *The Daily Chronicle*. These were often anonymous, and, as well from their necessary limitations as from the circumstances under which they were printed, they fall within the sphere of what has been termed the "higher journalism." Rather than completed pieces of work, these reviews formed excellent material for a process of revision, compression, and welding such as produced more than one of Walter Pater's critical essays; but Johnson never undertook this work. Even so, it has been felt by more than one competent judge and lover of letters that his impromptu reviews are worth our remembrance; Miss Louise Imogen Guiney, for example, having called Lionel Johnson England's "one critic of the first rank" in his generation. And it was in response to this conviction that in 1911<sup>1</sup> a volume of Johnson's critical papers was published under the editorship of Mr Thomas Whittmore. This editor hazardously attempted to do what Johnson had left undone; he compressed many of the reviews he printed, and welded together those on related subjects in order to produce pieces that would look something like "real" essays. Yet, whatever we may think of such attempts, we must be grateful for the papers thus made accessible to the public. The modest aim of the present small volume is to supplement this earlier one with twelve further reviews, here brought together for the first time, and printed, moreover, exactly as their author wrote them. These papers, it is perhaps best to state, were all signed with their

<sup>1</sup> The American edition is dated 1912.

author's full name, so that there can be no question of their genuineness.

And these papers show clearly Johnson's excellence as a critic of literature. They are written vividly, in a style pointed by the freshness of his thought and the reality of his interest rather than by any meretricious playing with words or other kind of cheap cleverness. Without any of the heaviness of Dr Samuel Johnson's rhetoric, the younger Johnson's style shows a profitable study of his great predecessor's manner of talking and writing; as when he speaks of finding in some Irishmen "a certain amiable narrowness, . . . a conservatism rather obstinate than strong, less resolute than stubborn," or observes that "a militant faith is one thing, and an irritable fussiness another." Johnson has been very generally regarded as a disciple of Walter Pater, and he has himself expressed, in both prose and verse, a depth of friendly and reverent feeling for Pater that implies at least the warm sentiment of discipleship. One can indeed trace an indebtedness in some peculiarities of style, though Johnson's style is in general no more like Pater's than it is like Samuel Johnson's; but with this, actual relationship between the two men ends. Each took his literary art with a great and becoming seriousness, it is true, but it needs only a moment's reflection to see that the ends each sought to serve—the ideas each attempted to express artistically—were not only different, but deeply opposed to each other. Pater's constant attempt was to replace what he took to be the worn-out and discredited view-point of the Christian world with the Epicurean creed of sensation as the end of life, whereas Lionel Johnson

was never so deceived by the intellectual fashions of the moment, but steadfastly held before his readers the spiritual and moral ideals of traditionary Christianity.

More important than style, then, the great thing shown in these reviews is what we may call, simply, Johnson's good sense. We see everywhere the activity of the judging faculty, the balancing or weighing of the qualities a writer has, the pronouncement of a verdict upon the book in hand. The verdict is always acute; at times it is unusually expressive in a very few words; as when he says of Byron, he "could shout magnificently, laugh splendidly, thunder tumultuously; but he could not sing"; and "stanza upon stanza of *Childe Harold* reads like the finest things in Irish or American oratory, grandiose and sweeping." Or hear him upon Boswell, anticipating some recent defenders of that gentleman: "A very quaint man, a very ludicrous man, but certainly a great man: causes and effects must be commensurable, and the Boswell of *Boswell's Johnson*, that splendid and unique creation, cannot have been no more than a prying, impertinent, besotted, brainless busybody, a meddling, mannerless, self-important little chatterer, with a big note-book and a good memory. Men 'don't do such things' as write masterpieces without a master's ability."

Johnson's, moreover, was a learned good sense; his judgment was informed, disciplined by intimate, repeated contact with the enduring things in the classical and modern literatures. His learning was great, and it was real in that he had made the spirit of great men his own, yet it did not sit heavily upon him. He was a scholar to some purpose, not from mere acquisitiveness. He was thus not drawn into

the past by his protracted studies ; he rather drew the best things of the past into himself, for enlightenment, while remaining ever a true son of his own day, fully alive to the interests, the problems, the hopes and fears of his generation. In consequence there was no pedantry or, in the popular sense of the word, "academic" flavour in his evaluations of current literature. He was able to enter into the spirit of the writers of the hour, but thanks to his disciplined judgment he entered with his eyes open and knew what he saw. It is a rare accomplishment ; it operated to give meaning, weight, authority to Johnson's always polite and friendly words.

His type of criticism had its opponents in his day, and of course has them still. With those opponents sensible men will agree that a significant criticism of literature is no dead mechanic exercise, but no less must sensible men assert against them that criticism worth the reading is something other than the mere variegated record of "the soul's impressions," however delicate. Here there can be no real controversy, but the use of a critic's obviously necessary standards is neither easy nor mechanical. Without singularly keen perceptions and unfailing tact the critic may as easily as other men, to put it plainly, make a fool of himself and stultify his work. Lionel Johnson did neither. His reviews are impressive witness to the correctness, and hence the usefulness, of this sturdy type of criticism. His verdicts wear well—are in the main as good to-day as when he wrote them—and testify that in some regions at least men can, if they will, find permanent truth.

Johnson's taste and tact were of course not free from limitation. But both, evidently, were not

assumed, like "company manners," for the public performance. Both were real and of his very nature—not "created," but merely developed and deepened by his long studies and voluntary companionship with

". . . thoughts and things of an eternal fashion:  
The majesty and dignity  
Of everlasting verity."

He proved, then, a severe yet sympathetic judge of literary form or style; he had as well a lively and true sense for what may be called the personal or individual note in literature, a matter of course closely connected with style, but much larger and the fundamental quality opposing humane letters to the exact sciences; and he had also no mean capacity in sound judgment of thought and morals in their more abstract aspects. No critic has possessed all three of these kinds of sensibility, or perception, in equal degree; and very generally a man who possesses the first and second kinds is found to have little talent for the third. Johnson, certainly, was more at home—more interested and interesting—in the realms of style and personality in literature; yet not his least claim to our concern is his competency, his so general soundness, in the field of the more generalised or abstract criticism. Miss Guiney has spoken of his "strongly philosophic fibre." Everyone may not be able to discern this, but everyone who knows Lionel Johnson will see what she meant. For Johnson, though in no sense a philosopher, was a man, not only in the sphere of literary art, of sound principles firmly grasped and clearly understood.

It is a nice question how in these days of narrow

training rather than of education, when intellectual provincialism is enjoying an unacknowledged but almost perfect triumph, Johnson came to acquire and retain a view-point so sound and so well rounded. He learned something beyond doubt from Samuel Johnson, and he got more, very probably, just from the saving grace of his own nature. Moreover, even yet there is less sheer tyranny of popular opinion in England than in America. But our guess is that a chief influence saving him from the mental and moral confusion on every side was his entry into the Roman Catholic Church. He was received into that Church, not in extreme youth as a matter of family tradition, but—as result of his own questionings and thought—in 1891 after he had come down from Oxford. It is not meant, of course, that Johnson's mere subscription to the dogma of the Roman Catholic Church, whatever it may have done for him spiritually, worked in him any miracle intellectually. The important thing, from our present view-point, is the larger meaning of such an act as a very definite spiritual affirmation, made deliberately. It is true, the mere knowledge that one has made oneself a corporate part of this ancient depositary of Christian faith must fortify one inwardly; but in addition the definite spiritual affirmation itself—disposing once and for all of so much!—provides a unique foundation on which to base a life. That act of faith—and of course, for the personal result in this life, it need not be one so trying to the present-day mind as was Johnson's—becomes a point of orientation for all human affairs. And for a man of Lionel Johnson's open-eyed, independent intelligence such definite faith in the spiritual nature and destiny of humanity



means, not the stagnation and deadening of thought, but merely a fruitful guidance of it that assures for one's thinking, force, consistency, and the unplumbed strength of traditionary wisdom. There should be nothing strange in this; and there will be nothing strange to anyone who knows the lives of, for instance, such men as Milton or Samuel Johnson. Their conduct of life, so much happier than Lionel Johnson's in the practical matters of day to day, was based upon unquestioning religious faith which served, exactly in the manner here indicated, as the starting-point for vigorous, fruitful and permanently significant lives.

Here, too, in these slight reviews, Lionel Johnson points, not so stridently as implicitly, a lesson for the present day. This is not the place to enlarge upon our multiform modern confusion, where impudent shams and old delusions run their way practically unchecked through our praised enlightenment, and where so-called scientists easily impose deadening superstitions upon the multitude; but it is evident the time has come when men must realise anew the permanent place of faith in human life, and must choose with opened eyes between the two faiths possible—for there is no more "proof" with one than with the other—between faith in a mechanical universe, with all its impossibilities, and faith in our spiritual nature and divine destiny, with all its difficulties. These reviews, it is thought, have a present interest from their subject-matter; they have some permanent interest from Lionel Johnson's clear and spirited manner of judging literary and human values, from his unswerving insistence upon the reality and meaning of our better selves.

R. S.

# REVIEWS BY LIONEL JOHNSON

## THE LIGHT THAT FAILED

BY RUDYARD KIPLING

(*The Academy*, 4th April 1891)

“ ‘ Good Lord ! who can account for the fathomless folly of the public ? ’ ‘ They’re a remarkably sensible people. ’ ‘ They’re subject to fits, if that’s what you mean ; and you happen to be the object of the latest fit among those who are interested in what they call art. Just now you’re a fashion, a phenomenon, or whatever you please. ’ ”

THIS is part of a conversation between Dick Helder, a young artist whose work has taken the public, and his best friend Torpenhow. Mr Kipling will not think me discourteous, if I confess that these wise words bear for me a second application to himself. Thanks to the incessant criticism, panegyric, detraction and talk inflicted upon his work in the last year, one feels an unreasoning desire, either to defer the study of Mr Kipling till the hubbub die down, or to assume an indifference towards him, in the name of sober sense. Either course would be foolish, and neither is possible. Whatever else be true of Mr Kipling, it is the first truth about him that he has power : not a clever trick, nor a happy knack, nor a flashy style, but real intrinsic power. The reader of contemporary books, driven mad by the distracting affectations, the contemptible pettiness, of so much modern work, feels his whole heart go out towards a writer with mind and muscle in him, not only nerves and sentiment. To

get into the grip of a new writer; not to saunter arm in arm with him, listening to his tedious and familiar elegancies: that is what we want. Style, the perfection of workmanship, we cannot do without that; but still less can we endure the dexterous and polished imitation of that. It is easy enough to find fault with Mr Kipling, to deplore certain technical failures, to cry out against his lack of grace; but perfect workmanship is the last good gift, and granted only to the faithful and the laborious in literature. A writer whose first books have flesh and blood, mind and meaning in them, has the right to hope for all things. But the public is less kind than uncritical, when it admires "achieved perfection" in writings that have achieved much else that is good, but not yet that.

The present volume gives us the story "as it was originally conceived by the writer," not as it appeared in *Lippincott's Magazine*. There, as most of us know, the story has a pleasant and conventional close, with a marriage of the consolatory sort, familiar to English readers. It is difficult to think well of Mr Kipling in this matter; such a conclusion was impossible, upon the stated premises. But the book in its true form is finely and desperately logical. Briefly expressed, this is the idea:—A boy and a girl, brought up together not too happily, part as children, when the boy's sentiment of mere companionship begins to deepen into love, of a childish sort indeed, yet perfectly real. The boy leads a rough, adventurous life about the world, and after the most varied experiences, wins a sudden and perhaps precarious success in art. His life has been that of an Elizabethan adventurer, in the altered manner of this century: a life of the reckless sort, wild and free, with all the virtues of *camaraderie*, and with few of the more decorous moral excellences. Settled, more or less, in London, he meets the girl again, whom he has never forgotten; she, too, is an artist, full of ambition, eager for recognition, and singularly selfish. She refuses

to think of love and marriage ; and he devotes himself, half in hope, half in despair, to her service in art. From the effect of an early wound he grows blind ; and the culminating point of interest is reached when the question presents itself to the girl, whom he has loved and served, whether now, in mere compassion and self-respect, she will marry him, and so pay back his devotion by an act of willing self-denial. In sheer selfishness, perfectly natural and immensely strong, she prefers her freedom and her foolish dreams of fame. He cannot endure the idle agony of his life, cut off from all the best things in the world ; and he makes his way out to the Soudan, the old scene of his early life, and is there killed, dying in his friend's arms.

The story has a double interest : the interest of character in Maisie the heroine, and the interest of dramatic life and action in Dick the hero and in his friends. Hero and heroine are not the right words, but let that pass. Now the first thought that occurs to one well acquainted with Mr Kipling's work, upon reading this, his longest book, is of this sort : why is the interest of character so slight and the interest of action and of life so strong ? Scenes of superb vigour and animation, passages of wonderful force and movement, these have struck us and taken hold upon us ; but the characters, emotions, the mind and soul of Maisie and of Dick have not been felt, and do not remain with us. We remember how they looked, talked, bore themselves in various situations ; we still hear their characteristic phrases, we still see their attitudes and motions ; but themselves, their inner reality, for all the power and mind of the book, are strange to us. Perhaps this may be the reason. Mr Kipling, before all things, is an observer, not a thinker. Certainly no one can observe life without colouring or shaping his observations by his thoughts ; each has his own way of observing life, according to his own habit and cast of mind. But it is not so much the reflections upon life, as the reflections of life, that Mr

Kipling values ; and he leaves the bare facts, in all their intensity and vividness, to create the impression which he desires us to receive. There must be no waste of words, no flow of sentiment, no dwelling upon motives ; take the facts, he seems to say, as life-like as I can show them, and make what you can of them. This may be called cynicism, but it need not be that. Without question it is an effective literary method ; but, and here is the difficulty, it is a method of very limited application. It will excellently serve for a brilliant sketch of certain scenes, where the men and women act and speak in character, with all the appropriate peculiarities of manner and speech. A third-class smoking-carriage full of soldiers, labourers and city clerks, each with his personal or professional dialect and style, and with that curious force and energy which belong to the less cultured—Mr Kipling's manner serves perfectly to give us that. But a drawing-room full of more sophisticated and of less intelligible persons, all possessing the complicated emotions and using the subtle language of a life externally refined : what will his robust method make of that ? Here we turn to Mr Henry James. He will in twenty pages bring home to us the passion or the intellect at work in that room, perhaps during one hour only ; yet each word will be essential and indispensable. If Mr James try his hand upon coarser material, he fails at once : witness many pages of *The Princess Casamassima*. Hitherto Mr Kipling has been successful when dealing with life of a certain vehement intensity, not only in the emotions of it, but in the outward manner : his soldiers, with their heartiness, or roughness, or swagger, or strength, men " of strange oaths," full of experience, yet children after all in many things—these are admirable. Or his natives of India, whose circumstances, sordid or picturesque, dignified or pathetic, are felt to be impressive—these he can present to us in perfection. But in whatever he handles well, there must be salient points rather than delicate shades. " One

crowded hour of glorious life," splendid and intoxicating, he can render into words of marvellous intensity; some scene of touching pitifulness, quite simple and human, he can draw with touches absolutely true and right. He is master of human nature in the rough, in its primitive or unconventional manifestations. His rapid sketches, carefully as they are designed, give an impression rather of an immense capacity of eye than of a fineness of sympathy and understanding. His work of this "coloured and figured" sort is unrivalled, and stands alone; no one has done anything quite like it. But Mr Kipling is, or seems to be, so fascinated by these lively effects that he wishes to treat everything in the same way, which is irritating. He appears almost to despise whatever is not vivid and impressive; to look at everything from the standpoint of a man who knows camps and barracks, wild countries and native quarters. He attempts to play Othello to his ignorant reader's Desdemona, in a manner almost ludicrous. A writer may be intimate with Valparaiso and Zanzibar without being superior to the reader, who knows only Bloomsbury and Kensington, or Oxford and Manchester. It is impossible to take English life of all kinds by storm, for literary purposes, with the methods applicable to military stations in India. And so, whilst in this book the scenes in the Soudan, and the riotous humours of special correspondents, are convincing and true to the inexperienced reader, there is a great deal which rings false. Torpenhow's warning comes into our mind, "Take care, Dick: remember, this isn't the Soudan." When Mr Kipling is concerned with Maisie's character, and the less obvious emotions of life, we are constantly thinking, take care: remember, this isn't an Irish private. One striking fact illustrates this comparative incapacity for treating delicate or sophisticated sentiments: we cannot remember the phrases used. Professional terms, technical slang, all varieties of masculine dialect and expression, are easily remembered by Mr

Kipling's readers ; everything forcible and boisterous. But of Dick's conversation with Maisie, of the sentiment and psychological description, we can quote not one word. Take away from Mr Kipling his salient points and lively effects, and then his style becomes merely commonplace. And even in his best passages, the strained expression, the unrelaxed determination to be vigorous, grows wearisome. Contrast with Mr Kipling the enchanting style of Pierre Loti ; that strangely ironical and gentle style, so caressing and unforgettable. For *Les trois Dames de la Kasbah*, we would give many a Plain Tale from the Hills. And, ultimately, Mr Kipling's incessant vigilance, lest he fall into the hackneyed and the tame, produces an effect of brilliant vulgarity : an effect wholly unjust to Mr Kipling, yet an inevitable result of his method, when carried to excess. Surely, one protests, we do not want special correspondence, even composed with genius.

Apart from this mannerism, Mr Kipling's work has innumerable good qualities. Restraint, a dislike of the superfluous, how rare is that just now ! To take one small instance : Mr Kipling makes Dick quote Emerson and Marvell, but he does not mention them, by name. In actual life, we do not mention the authors of our quotations ; we quote what we suppose familiar to our companions. But in books there seems to come upon the writer a desire to exhibit his reading ; he mentions Emerson and Marvell. It is an infinitely small matter, but it is precisely characteristic of Mr Kipling. Directness, also ; only Mr Meredith, Mr Hardy, and Mr Stevenson, to name three very varied writers, can so give us the absolutely right and infallible phrase. Mr Kipling, with "his eye on the object," is astounding ; with no accumulation of detail, no tiresome minuteness, he brings before us the very reality of life and of character, so far as character can be shown in sketches of talk and action. For there are these limitations to Mr Kipling's art ; within them I recognise with

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gratitude and admiration a fine writer. But, outside them, I seem to see, if I may make a vigorous quotation in Mr Kipling's manner, "another good man gone wrong." Let us hope for the best, and enjoy what is already in so great a measure so excellent.



# LIFE'S HANDICAP: BEING STORIES OF MINE OWN PEOPLE

BY RUDYARD KIPLING

(*The Academy*, 17th October 1891)

MR KIPLING has gathered into a volume twenty-seven stories: the best of them have been already recognised by readers of the magazines as Mr Kipling's finest work. The book is so characteristic, for good and bad, of its author, that it may be interesting to attempt a classification of these twenty-seven stories. Eight of them, with certain limitations, are excellent: "The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney," "The Courting of Dinah Shadd," "On Greenhow Hill," "The Man Who Was," "Without Benefit of Clergy," "Through the Fire," "The Finances of the Gods," and "Little Tobrah." To these may be added the Preface. They deal with the famous triumvirate of privates, with the British army, and with the comedy and tragedy of native life and character. Two stories, "At the End of the Passage" and "The Mark of the Beast," are concerned with the grim and terrible possibilities and impossibilities of sickness, weariness, fear, superstition, climate, work, and, to put it plainly, the devil, as shown by the experiences of Englishmen in India. Three more, "The Return of Imray," "Bubbling Well Road" and "Bertran and Bimi," are powerful stories of the horrible, without any mixture of mystery and impossibility. Three, "The Mutiny of the Mavericks," "The Head of the District" and "Namgay Doola," have, more or less directly, a political moral wrapped up in them. Five more, "The Amir's Homily," "Jews in Shushan," "The Limitations of Pambe Serang," "The City

of Dreadful Night" and "The Dream of Duncan Parreness," are mediocre examples of Mr Kipling's various manners; and of these the fourth is the most striking. The remaining six, in my sincere and humble opinion, do not deserve publication: "The Lang Men o' Larut," "Reingelder and the German Flag," "The Wandering Jew," "Moti Guj," "Georgie Porgie" and "Naboth." The volume ends with some of Mr Kipling's best verses.

This is, of course, merely a classification made according to the mind of one particular reader, with his own tastes and prejudices. Among the stories which I think the worst, is one which many readers have ranked among the best. But, upon the whole, I think that most readers would accept the classification in its spirit and intention.

The one great fault in Mr Kipling's work is, not its "brutality," nor its fondness for strong effects, but a certain taint of bad manners, from the literary point of view. He insists upon spicing his stories with an ill-flavoured kind of gossip, wholly irrelevant, and very offensive. For example: "The Man Who Was," an admirable story, full of that indefinable spirit, military patriotism and regimental pride, is spoilt by this pointless passage:

"And indeed they were a regiment to be admired. When Lady Durgan, widow of the late Sir John Durgan, arrived in their station, and after a short time had been proposed to by every single man at mess, she put the public sentiment very neatly when she explained that they were all so nice that unless she could marry them all, including the colonel and some majors already married, she was not going to content herself with one hussar. Wherefore she wedded a little man in a Rifle Regiment, being by nature contradictory: and the White Hussars were going to wear crape on their arms, but compromised by attending the wedding in full force, and lining

the aisle with unutterable reproach. She had jilted them all—from Basset-Holmer, the senior captain, to little Mildred, the junior subaltern, who could have given her four thousand a year and a title."

I hate to mutilate a book ; but I hope to read this story often ; and, rather than meet the offence and the annoyance of that silly stuff, in a story otherwise splendid, I have obliterated the passage. Too often, in reading Mr Kipling, we are forced to say, "That would make a good special report," or "That's a telling bit of war correspondence": yet special reports and war correspondence are good things of their kind. But the passage just quoted shows merely the contemptible smartness of a society journal ; and of a very inferior specimen. I do not say that the thing did not, could not, or should not, happen : I do say that Mr Kipling, as an artist, one careful to preserve the tone and the proportion of his work, commits a grave offence against his art by such a fall from the fine to the trivial, without just cause. And from the frequency of his offence, in every book that he has written, it would seem that he does not feel the common sentiments of natural good breeding and of artistic reticence. Two expressions in a stirring passage of the same story jar upon us in the same way :

"The talk rose higher and higher, and the regimental band played between the courses, as is the immemorial custom, till all tongues ceased for a moment with the removal of the dinner-slips, and the first toast of obligation, when an officer rising said, 'Mr Vice, the Queen,' and little Mildred from the bottom of the table answered, 'The Queen, God bless her,' and the big spurs clanked as the big men heaved themselves up and drank the Queen, upon whose pay they were falsely supposed to settle their mess bills. That sacrament of the mess never grows

old, and never ceases to bring a lump into the throat of the listener wherever he be by sea or by land."

What is the point here of dragging in the familiar fact that the Queen's pay is insufficient for a modern officer under modern circumstances? It sounds like the petty, ill-conditioned criticism of some Cockney money-lender: it is a crying false note, coming just in that place. Again, "toast of obligation" and "sacrament of the mess" are phrases in which it is difficult not to see a flippant reference to two ecclesiastical and sacred terms. These things are fatal to the perfection of a story; and Mr Kipling's taste for them is his worst enemy. But it may be observed that they do not occur except when Mr Kipling is dealing with English officers and civilians: his "common" soldiers and his Indian natives, under all circumstances and conditions, talk, and are treated by Mr Kipling, without these petty offences against good taste. Ortheris and Mulvaney, Ameera and Khoda Dad Khan, in every mood or situation, are allowed by Mr Kipling to live without those peculiar tricks and tones, which in his stories are the essential notes of the English gentleman in India. His officers and his civil servants, Orde, Tallantire, Hummil, Spurstow, Lowndes, Mottram, Strickland, and "I," one and all talk with a strained intensity, a bitter tone, a sharp conciseness, an abbreviation of epigram, a clever slang, which are meant to denote, partly their cultured intellects and partly that sentiment of fatality and dogged endurance which Mr Kipling would have us believe to be the invariable result of official work in India. The Empire, the Administration, the Government, become in Mr Kipling's hands necessary and yet amusing powers, in whose service Englishmen are willing to toil and sweat, knowing that *il n'y pas d'homme necessaire*, but content to go on, relieved by making cynical epigrams about life and death, and everything before, between, or after them. The consciousness of duty

becomes the consciousness of a mechanical necessity: the sentiment of loyalty is caricatured into a cynical perseverance. One thinks of Dalhousie and of the Lawrences. Mr Kipling has had experience of English life and work in India: his readers, for the most part, have not. But I would ask any reader, who has known English officers and civilians, before, during, and after their Indian service, whether he has found them quite so brilliant or quite so ill-bred, quite so epigrammatic or quite so self-conscious, as these creatures of Mr Kipling. Is it that before leaving home, or while home on leave, or when done with India, they are natural Englishmen; but that an Indian climate, and a share in Indian administration, turn them into machines: men who seem to talk like telegrams, and to think in shorthand, and to pose, each as a modern Atlas, helping to uphold the Indian Empire, and swearing pessimist oaths at its weight? Mr Kipling presents English rule in India, for purposes of effective fiction, as a huge and ironical joke, or, to use one of his favourite words, as a "grim" comedy. In fact, whenever he gives us the views of life held by men of education and official responsibility, they are the views expressed by his title, *Life's Handicap*. You start with your chances and make the best of the race, sure to be tripped up half way by the irony of the fates and powers, or baulked at the very finish. In "The Head of the District," a dying man sees his wife crossing the river to meet him, and knows that she will come too late; and his last words are:

" 'That's Polly,' he said simply, though his mouth was wried with agony. 'Polly and—the grimmest practical joke ever played on a man. Dick—you'll—have—to—explain.' "

The one story in the book, admirable from first to last, is "The Courting of Dinah Shadd": the tragedy of his life,

told by Mulvaney. The Irishman's story is told with perfect truth and pity: Mr Kipling makes not one mistake in sentiment. But had Mulvaney's colonel told the story of *his* life, Mr Kipling would have filled it with cheap jests and cynicisms, gall and bitterness.

Years ago, *Werther* first, and *Childe Harold* afterwards, brought into fashion the philosophy of woe and want, and tragic heroics: a perverted sensibility, an affectation of misery and despair: its victims or devotees wept over their sorrows and shrieked at their gods. But the posture was tiring, and at last literature renounced it. Just now, a new philosophy is coming into fashion: it is required of a man that he be virile, robust and bitter. Laugh at life, and jest with the world: waste no words and spare no blushes: whatever you do, do it doggedly, and whatever you say, put a sting into it. In sentiment, let Voltaire talking Ibsen be your ideal: in life, rival the Flying Dutchman for recklessness, the Wandering Jew for restlessness, and the American rowdy for readiness to act. Life is short, so stuff it full: art is long, so cut it short. Various men have various methods: some writers cut art short by reducing it to impressions, some by reducing it to epigrams. Whichever you do, care nothing for beauty and truth, but everything for brevity and effect. You may lead your readers to believe that you have stayed at home and analysed yourself till you were sick of yourself; or that you have raged round the world and found all hollow, without you and within. You can make literature an affair of nerves or an affair of blood: you may paint life grey, or paint it red. But if you would be a modern man of letters, before all else, ignore the Ten Commandments and the Classics. Swear by the sciences, which you have not studied, and the foreign literature, which you read in translation: if you want to make a hit, bring the *Iliad* up to date: you need only double the bloodshed, and turn the long speeches into short, smart, snapping cynicisms.

Some of these follies, which many writers now take for virtues, are but the accidental vices of Mr Kipling's work ; and it is because he can write so well that I have ventured to suggest that he often writes far too badly. A writer suddenly and deservedly welcomed with great praise is at once imitated by all sorts of incapable persons ; and for one story which has something of his real charm and power, there are twenty with nothing but his casual levities and unfortunate mannerisms. For example, "The Mark of the Beast" is a story of an incident among the more unnecessary horrors of life in India, brought about by "the power of the Gods and Devils of Asia." An Englishman pays a drunken insult to Hanuman, the monkey-god, in his temple at night : a leper, a "Silver Man," just drops his head upon the man's breast, and nothing more. And gradually, with dreadful warnings and signs, the man's nature is changed into a beast's, a wolf's. It is an uncanny, haunting story, told with a singular power : but Mr Kipling does not seem to know wherein consist the real horror and fascination of his own work. A passage of pure and perfect excellence is often followed by one of simple bad taste and feebleness. For example : while Fleete, the werewolf, is lying bound in the house, with his two friends watching, the cry of the Silver Man is heard outside. They determine to capture him, and go into the garden : and "in the moonlight we could see the leper coming round the corner of the house. He was perfectly naked, and from time to time he mewed and stopped to dance with his shadow." That sentence gave me a literal shudder of sudden fear, like the fear of a child in the dark : for complete effectiveness, in the narration of a fearful story, it could not be beaten. It is horrible, but the horror is not strained and emphasised ; the simple words do their work naturally. The two men succeed in capturing the leper ; they resolve to torture him into removing the spell from their friend. "When we confronted him with the beast, the scene was beyond

description. The beast doubled backwards into a bow as though he had been poisoned with strychnine, and moaned in the most pitiable fashion." Well, that is right enough in its way; but Mr Kipling adds, "several other things happened also, but they cannot be put down here." And "Strickland shaded his eyes with his hands for a moment, and we set to work. This part is not to be printed." A row of asterisks follows. Now this suggestion of unmentionable horror is a piece of the very worst possible art: Mr Kipling means to thrill us with absolute horror, to fill us with shuddering apprehensions of absolute fearfulness. He fails: we feel nothing but wonder and contempt, to find so able a writer fall into so pitiable a device. And he is constantly leading us up to the doors of a sealed chamber of horrors, and expecting us to be smitten with dread. The fearful and the terrible are not necessarily loathsome to the senses, matters of blood and noisome pestilence: they are produced by appeals to the imagination and to the intellect. Running through Mr Kipling's work, and spoiling its value, is this strain of bad taste: irritated by silly sentiment, he takes up silly cynicism; angry with foolish shamefacedness, he adopts a foolish shamelessness. Rather than let his work win its way by the subtle power of its ideas, he prefers to force our attention by the studied abruptness of his phrases. It is characteristic of the times: General Booth and Mr Stanley, the German Emperor and General Boulanger, have done much the same thing in practical affairs. But Mr Kipling, in his profession, is a greater man than they in theirs and we continue to hope against hope for his ultimate purification and perfection.



# BARRACK-ROOM BALLADS AND OTHER VERSES

BY RUDYARD KIPLING

(*The Academy*, 28th May 1892)

THE two divisions of this book disclose the strength and the weakness of Mr Kipling: triumphant success and disastrous failure. Certainly, there are weak things among the strong, and strong things among the weak; but the good and the bad, for the most part, are separated, the wheat from the tares. The Barrack-Room Ballads are fine and true; the Other Verses, too many of them, are rhetorical and only half true. It is more important, then, as it is more pleasant, to consider first, and at the greater length, the Barrack-Room Ballads.

They are written in the dialect of "the common soldier," of "Tommy Atkins"; they are composed in his spirit also. It is a curious reflection that the British army at large, and the British soldier in particular, have received so little attention in literature of any excellence. We have plenty of heroic poems, as Mr Henley and many others know well; plenty of verse alive with the martial spirit, with the "pomp and circumstance of glorious war"; plenty of things hardly less great than Wordsworth's "Happy Warrior," or the Laureate's "Ode on Wellington." But of the British army, as a way of daily life, as composed of individual men, as full of marked personal characteristics and peculiarities, our poets great and small have had little conception. What Smollett in prose, and Dibdin in verse, did for the navy, no one has yet done for the army. Famous achievements and signal successes of armies, or of regiments, or of individual

men, have been sung. Agincourt, Flodden, Blenheim, Waterloo, the Crimea, the Mutiny, have inspired praises, not always stilted and official; but the personal sentiments of the British soldier have not been the theme of any British poet worth naming. Certain criticisms which I have read of these Ballads have dwelt upon the technical difficulty of their dialect. Such criticism is of a piece with the prevailing apathy and ignorance concerning the army. Little wonder that Special Committees and Royal Commissions are required to look into its state, while so many critics of literature, whose pride and business it is to be omniscient, are baffled by the technical terms or the appropriate slang of these Ballads. Poems thick with archæological terms, with foreign phrases, with recondite learning and allusions, are accepted without demur. Mr Kipling's Indian stories have aroused no protest; but when he sings the common soldier in a common way, these omnivorous critics are aghast at the uncouth and mysterious language.

There are twenty of these Ballads; and there can hardly be said to be one failure among them, although two or three are of marked inferiority to the rest, and although the greater number look poor by the side of the four or five masterpieces. The most noticeable thing about them, on a first reading, is their swinging, marching music. The accents and beat of the verse fall true and full, like the rhythmical tramp of men's feet. Take such rhythms and measures as

“ For it was—‘ Belts, belts, belts, an’ that’s one for you !’  
An’ it was ‘ Belts, belts, belts, an’ that’s done for you !’ ”

Or as

“ When first under fire, an’ you’re wishful to duck,  
Don’t look nor take ’eed at the man that is struck,  
Be thankful you’re livin’, and trust to your luck,  
And march to your front like a soldier.

Front, front, front, like a soldier,  
 Front, front, front, like a soldier,  
 Front, front, front, like a soldier,  
     So-oldier *of* the Queen !”

Or, best of all, as

    “ On the road to Mandalay,  
     Where the old Flotilla lay ;  
 Can't you 'ear their paddles chunkin' from Rangoon to Mandalay?  
     On the road to Mandalay,  
     Where the flyin' fishes play,  
 An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the bay !”

They go with a swing and a march, an emphasis and a roll, which may delude the inexperienced into thinking them easy to “rattle off.” I should be greatly surprised to hear that Mr Kipling thought the same.

The Ballads deal with a few marked incidents, experiences, and emotions from the private soldier's point of view ; some general and unlocalised, but most peculiar to military life in the East. All Mr Kipling's undiverted and undiluted strength has gone into these vivid Ballads ; phrase follows phrase, instinct with life, quivering and vibrating with the writer's intensity. No superfluity, no misplaced condescension to sentiment, no disguising of things ludicrous or ugly or unpleasant ; Tommy Atkins is presented to the ordinary reader, with no apologies and with no adornments.

“ We aren't no thin red 'eroes, nor we aren't no blackguards too,  
     But single men in barricks, most remarkable like you,”

he sings : in a genial and, at the same time, an acute expostulation with the people, who exalt him in war but despise him in peace, in the amiable manner lately described by the Duke of Connaught. But no panegyrics could give the civilian a truer sense of the soldier's life, in its rough and ready hardships, than the experiences of camp and battle in these pages ; their grim pleasantry in describing the little accidents of a battery charge, the perversities of the commissariat camel, the dangers that await the “'arf

made" recruits in the East, the humours of the "time-expired," the fascinations of "loot," the joys of the "cells," the fatigue and the exhilaration of "route marchin'." Then we have the generous recognition of "Fuzzy-Wuzzy," the Soudanese:

"So 'ere's to you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, at your 'ome in the Soudan;  
You're a pore benighted 'eathen, but a first-class fightin' man;  
An' 'ere's to you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, with your 'ayrick 'ead of 'air—  
You big black boundin' beggar—for you broke a British square!"

And an eulogy no less generous is bestowed upon the native water-carrier, "our regimental bhisti, Gunga Din."

The most poetical, in the sense of being the most imaginative and heightened in expression, is "Danny Deeever," hanged for shooting a comrade.

"'Is cot was right-'and cot to mine,' said Files-on-Parade.  
'E's sleepin' out an' far to-night,' the Colou-Sergeant said.  
'I've drunk 'is beer a score o' times,' said Files-on-Parade.  
'E's drinkin' bitter beer alone,' the Colour-Sergeant said."

And perhaps the most winning of them all is "Mandalay": the Burmese girl and her lover, the British soldier, his sickness and disgust at London and England after those old times in the East.

"I'm learnin' 'ere in London what the ten-year soldier tells,  
'If you've 'eard the East a-callin', you won't never 'eed naught  
else'"

—which would seem to be the experience of Mr Kipling also.

There is plenty of matter in these Ballads to which "inquisitorial" critics, to use Milton's word, can take objection: the moral and dogmatic theology of the soldier, as indicated by Mr Kipling, is somewhat unauthorised and lax. But Mr Kipling has no ambition to paint him, except in his own colours; and, very seriously contemplated, these Ballads give a picture of life and character more estimable and praiseworthy for many rugged virtues of generosity,

endurance, heartiness, and simplicity, than are the lives and characters of many "gentlemen of England, who stay at home at ease."

Mr Kipling's Other Verses are less pleasant reading. Their rhetorical energy is splendid. At times they ring true to nature; but for the most part they are spasmodic, ranting, overstrained. For example, the volume opens with a poem to the praise of one whose death Mr Kipling has an especial right to lament, while all lovers of literature have also their regrets. It imagines the great dead in a Valhalla of the windiest sort. There, beyond the farthest ways of sun, or comet, or star, or "star-dust," "live such as fought, and sailed, and ruled, and loved, and made our world." There "they sit at wine with the Maidens Nine and the Gods of the Elder Days"; and

" 'Tis theirs to sweep through the ringing deep where Azrael's outposts are,  
Or buffet a path through the Pit's red wrath when God goes out to war,  
Or hang with the reckless Seraphim on the rim of a red-maned star."

There "they whistle the Devil to make them sport who know that Sin is vain"; but that is not all:

" And oft-times cometh our wise Lord God, master of every trade,  
And tells them tales of His daily toil, of Edens newly made;  
And they rise to their feet as He passes by, gentlemen unafraid."

It is a Paradise, an Elysium, a Valhalla, of "the Strong Men."

The hollow insincerity of this rhetoric is little short of marvellous; not, I need hardly say, that I impute any insincerity to the writer's spirit and intention. I mean, that the imaginative design of the poem, aiming at the heroic and the sublime, falls into a bathos worthy of Nat Lee. "The reckless Seraphim," to put it quite frankly, are absurd; and so is the whole attempt, by a mystical use of vague astronomy, to represent in a new fashion the home

and the life of the great dead. I can attach no meaning to the jumble of "Maidens Nine" and "Gods of the Elder Days" and "Azrael" and "the Pit" and "the Devil" and "our wise Lord God": if it be all metaphorical, a large and half-Oriental dream, it loses all semblance of reality; if it be more soberly meant, I prefer not to characterise it, but rather turn to Dante or to Virgil. Dante has no lack of strength and power; and I am more at home, with reverence be it said, in his *Paradiso*, with *il santo atleta*, than with the self-satisfied "Strong Men" of Mr Kipling. Yet, like all that he writes with any degree of excellence, these lines have fine things in them: witness the description of him who walked from his birth "in simpleness and gentleness and honour and clean mirth": a just and noble praise.

Mr Kipling has run riot in chaunting the glories of action; for still, as Mr Stevenson has it,

"For still the Lord is Lord of might;  
In deeds, in deeds, he takes delight."

It is very true; but he takes delight in other things also; and this glorification of the Strong, the Virile, the Robust, the Vigorous is fast becoming as great a nuisance and an affectation as were the True and the Beautiful years ago. It is so easy to bluster and to brag; so hard to remember that "they also serve who only stand and wait." Indeed, there seems to be no virtue which Mr Kipling would not put under the head of valour; virtue, to him, is *virtus*, and all the good qualities of man are valorous. From that point of view, saints and sinners, soldiers and poets, men of science and men of art, if they excel in their chosen works, are all Strong Men. That may be fair enough as a view of the matter to be sometimes emphasized; but we can have too much of it.

In some of his finest pieces Mr Kipling is a prey to the grandiose aspect of things. "The English Flag," for

example, in which the Winds of the World witness to England's greatness, is grievously spoiled by exaggeration of tone. We know that England is great, that Englishmen have done great things, that the fame of her glory has filled the corners of the earth ; but we have no occasion to shriek about it, to wax hysterically wroth with those who deny it. Shakespeare's great burst of loyal pride, Milton's solemn utterance, Wordsworth's noble verses, Browning's "Home Thoughts from Abroad," the Laureate's stately lyrics, do not brag and bluster and protest. "What should they know of England, who only England know?" cries Mr Kipling ; as though nothing short of ocular demonstration and a tourist's ticket could make the "poor little street-bred people" believe in the greatness of England by North, South, East and West. The occasion upon which the verses were written may justify some of this agitated declamation ; but the tone is habitual with Mr Kipling. Again, the delightful satire of "Tomlinson," the man with no soul of his own, whose God and whose virtues and whose rites came all "from a printed book," would be far more telling if there were some recognition of the fact that a man may be equally contemptible who "posts o'er land and ocean without rest," with no more soul than a thistle-down. I am duly sorry to rely so much upon "printed books" ; but I remember certain exhortations to the theoretic life in Plato and Aristotle, certain passages in Dante about *l'antica Rachele*, the Lady of Contemplation, and in Milton about "the cherub Contemplation," whom he wished for "first and chiefest." Doubtless, this is to take Mr Kipling's satire too seriously, and to have no sense of humour ; but I am in Mr Kipling's debt for so great a number of delights that I am the more moved to exclaim against his defects. I want to enjoy all that he writes. All that he urges against the effeminate, miserable people who take their whole standard of life and conduct from the opinions that they meet, and the society that surrounds

them, is admirable ; but it is not the whole truth. Perhaps, as Mr Stevenson suggests, there is no such thing as the whole truth.

Of the remaining poems, far the best are the "Ballad of East and West," a thing to stir the blood like a trumpet ; the "Conundrum of the Workshops," a charming satire upon critics and criticism ; and the ballads of the "Clampherdown" and the "Bolivar." The fierce and stinging verses against the Irish members concerned in the famous Commission are too virulent in their partisanship to be quite successful, even in the eyes of those who agree with them in the main. Of the Indian legends and ballads, we may say nothing ; most of them have some force and spirit, but they do not equal the similar work of Sir Alfred Lyall.

Let me conclude by expressing my thanks once more for the Barrack-Room Ballads ; in them, their unforced vigour and unexaggerated truth, I can forget all excesses of rhetoric, all extravagances of tone.



## THE WRECKER

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON AND LLOYD OSBOURNE

(*The Academy*, 6th August 1892)

IN one of his early essays Mr Stevenson played with the charming fancy that the conduct of life depends upon skill in literature : not indeed wholly, but in a great measure. It is no light task, he insisted, to communicate your precise sense of things, in set phrase, to another man : the choice of words, the nicety and exactitude of them, may fail to impress your companion, as you would have him impressed. All speech, all intercourse by word of mouth or by "hand of write," is so much practice of the literary art ; and human converse is thus encompassed with peril.

"The world was made before the English language, and seemingly upon a different design. Suppose we held our converse not in words, but in music, those who have a bad ear would find themselves cut off from all near commerce, and no better than foreigners in this big world. But we do not consider how many have 'a bad ear' for words, nor how often the most eloquent find nothing to reply."

From the first this whimsical commonplace has powerfully influenced Mr Stevenson ; it has made of him an æsthetic casuist, anxious about the veracity of his least word, its minutest tone and accent. Be it a story, a piece of criticism, an essay in ethics, a personal reminiscence, or a private adventure, each of his words is positively tremulous with its desire to tell the truth. Since the whole

of life is a continuous and coherent affair, he refuses to isolate literature in a secluded palace of art or bookworm's study: he wants to know life upon all sides, and he wants to express it upon all sides by the use of words. Thus it is that his choice of an adjective, his composition of a phrase, or his disposition of incidents, is for him an exercise in good conduct: a trial of truthfulness. We live in a very rich, full world: our behaviour in it, and our attitude towards it, expressed in words, comprehend all matters of belief and conduct. Of modern writers, only Mr Pater shares with Mr Stevenson this fine anxiety not to play life false by using inaccurate expressions. He also, whether he write essays or imaginative studies, or more formal narratives, shows this care for the truth, as he apprehends it. To Mr Pater an Italian church or a French landscape, an ancient liturgy or a classical rite, is a thing with definite values of its own, a thing with claims and rights, towards which he has duties; a shipwreck or a walking tour, an American man of business or a French artist, is the same to Mr Stevenson. The one is more meditative, more learned, more gentle, than the other; but both are men who feel the pathos, the heroism, the living significance of things—Virgil's "sense of tears in mortal things" and Browning's—

"How good is man's life, the mere living ! how fit to employ  
All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy !"

It is curious to reflect that many critics have found in Mr Pater and Mr Stevenson—two intensely practical, humane and sympathetic writers—little more than unreal eclectic profundities, intricacies and extravagances.

*The Wrecker* contains, as it were in solution, all the perfections of Mr Stevenson: upon the face of it, it has all the stirring romance of adventure which we enjoyed in *Treasure Island*; it displays two characters with all the impressive fidelity which made Alan Breck and the Master of Ballantrae so wonderful; it includes episodes and

sketches, varieties of life, such as those in the two books of travel, in the *Silverado Squatters*, and many single essays; it has much of that fantastic humour which adorns *The New Arabian Nights*; it provides us with more of those brilliancies of moral sentiment, already so characteristic of Mr Stevenson. The result is a delightful and imperfect book—a *satura*, a *farrago*, in which every reader can come upon something to his taste, and no reader feels satisfied throughout. The writers explain how it all came about, in an ingenious epilogue or apology: they determined, one moon-lit night in the Pacific, to write a story about the tale of a wreck, often the occasion of a rascally romance in commerce.

“Before we turned in, the scaffolding of the tale had been put together. But the question of treatment was, as usual, more obscure. We had long been at once attracted and repelled by that very modern form of the police novel or mystery story, which consists in beginning your yarn anywhere but at the beginning and finishing it anywhere but at the end; attracted by its peculiar interest when done, and the peculiar difficulties that attend its execution; repelled by that appearance of insincerity and shallowness of tone, which seems its inevitable drawback.”

They determined, by a more artistic method, by a gradual approach to the story, making the chief character familiar from the first among many various scenes, to give an air of reality to the central mystery. To this end the story flies from Muskegon to Edinburgh, from Edinburgh to Paris, from Paris to San Francisco, before the puzzle of the wreck in the Pacific is introduced: and, to solve that puzzle, the story flies from San Francisco to Dorsetshire and to Barbizon, where the answer is given. The answer takes us to Australia, the Pacific and San Francisco once

more. I do not know that courtesy compels me to accept for literal truth the author's explanation; but it is more convincing, at least, than Poe's account of his evolution of the "Raven," in his essay upon the "Philosophy of Composition." To Mr Stevenson's method are due at once the charm and the defect of *The Wrecker*. The charm lies in single episodes: the Bohemian life of art in Paris, the Bohemian life of commerce in San Francisco, the splendid voyage to the Pacific Islands, the search for treasure upon the abandoned ship: and in certain characters—Pinkerton, the tactless and romantic speculator; Nares, the brutal, philosophical and cordial seaman. But the central facts of the story are obscured by the very means employed to make them plausible and natural. The story begins and ends with some lack of symmetry and rounded form. The last details are told by Mr Stevenson, *propria persona*, in a letter of dedication to a friend. It reminds us of Scott's intricate prefaces, introductions and involved machinery for getting his main story under weigh. Pleasant in themselves, these contrivances do but embarrass the story which they are meant to serve. In the present case, the difficulties of the narrative are pardonable enough, for they help us to realise that variety and richness of life which Mr Stevenson never wearies of praising.

It may be objected to this story that it contains episodes of brutal violence, murder and blood-shedding, which its author presents with a certain callousness, if not with a certain gusto. But Mr Stevenson himself supplies an answer by his constant trust in human nature. To him every man has some nobility, and we are all incomprehensible together. Captain Nares was full of barbarity, vanity, ill-conditioned humours, but

"he won me to a kind of unconsenting fondness. Lastly, the faults were all embraced in a more generous

view: I saw them in their place, like discords in a musical progression, and accepted them, and found them picturesque, as we accept and admire, in the habitable face of nature, the smoky head of the volcano, or the pernicious thicket of the swamp."

The world is a pageant of vices and of virtues, to be endured by all means, to be enjoyed if may be. Our vices have something good in them, and our virtues are not all pure. Dodd, the narrator of the story, is grossly ungrateful to his strange, lovable comrade, Pinkerton: he writes him pages of penitence.

"Wonderful are the consolations of literature! As soon as that letter was written and posted, the consciousness of virtue glowed in my veins like some rare vintage."

In the thick of a dangerous storm Nares was happy:

"Well, there's always something sublime about a big deal like that; and it kind of raises a man in his own liking. We're a queer kind of beasts, Mr Dodds."

Bellairs, a "shyster," or disbarred lawyer, with qualms of conscience, goes to blackmail an unfortunate man. Dodd comments: "I used to wonder whether I most admired or most despised this quivering heroism for evil." Mr Stevenson feels to the full what Mr Watson has expressed in four lines:

"Momentous to himself as I to me  
Hath each man been that ever woman bore;  
Once, in a lightning-flash of sympathy,  
I felt this truth, an instant, and no more."

But with Mr Stevenson this truth is always present; and it has preserved him from that easy contempt for whole

classes of men which so many brilliant living writers love to express. It is instructive to compare Mr Stevenson's praise of a free, natural life of work under sun and wind and rain, with Mr Kipling's praise of a strenuous, rapid, active life—the one so simply honest and exhilarating, the other so merely bitter and exasperating. The two writers have something in common; Mr Stevenson makes us interested in such things as a "deep-water tramp, lime-juicing around between big ports, Calcutta and Rangoon and 'Frisco and the Canton River": Mr Kipling in such experience as "loafing from Lima to Auckland in a big, old, condemned passenger-ship turned into a cargo-boat and owned by a second-hand Italian firm." Yet the interest roused in us by Mr Stevenson is very different from that roused by Mr Kipling: it is the difference between the truth of poetry and the truth of science. Behind Mr Stevenson's writing there is a soul and a heart; behind Mr Kipling's a good memory and a keen eye. A detail, recorded by Mr Stevenson, has always some human interest; it betokens more than quick observation and mechanical experience. It means that Mr Stevenson has been true to his pleasant boast: that he has never found life wholly dull and vapid; that his sympathy with all forms of life and all ways of men has made him alert to notice the little details which go to compose them. This is a brave book, as confused as the *Iliad*, as adventurous as the *Odyssey*, and with no little of the heartening morality common to both.

## BALLADS AND SONGS

BY JOHN DAVIDSON

(*The Academy*, 5th January 1895)

“**L**ORD! what a pleasure it is to come across a man that can *write*!” said Dickens of Tennyson. Certainly it is, and a rare pleasure, too; for the abhorrent amateur is always with us, but the true writers visit us like angels. The most immediately felt charm of Mr Davidson’s verse is its goodly energy and force, its excellent vitality: there is life-blood in the strong and vehement lines. He has not a trace of waterish sentiment and prettiness: in the phrase of Coleridge, he does not seek to win us “with sonnets and with sympathy” of a miscellaneous sort. Each poem has lived in the poet’s life, and issues from a living fire of passion, imagination, thought: there is no clever impersonality about it. And the defects of its qualities are not lacking: a certain feverishness at times, an unpruned wealth of words, a rapidity which makes the verse pant for want of breath. This poet’s wine can be heady and rasping and crude. Even in his finest work there is just some lack of the *ultima manus*, with its perfecting and rounding touch: just that serenity and grace are sometimes absent which mark the assured triumph of the masterpiece. “What verse he will be writing in ten years!” is the reader’s conviction, rather than a complete confidence in the virtue of the verse before him. In short, *Sturm und Drang* are not wholly over yet: the elements of a perfect art are still in fusion and fermentation.

But these poems are rich in beauty and strength of a

rare accomplishment. For one thing, it is impossible not to see what the poet is at and about: the themes, intellectual and emotional, are extraordinarily vivid: they appeal, and arrest and detain, with a dramatic intensity. As in the greatest preaching, all the ornate and wheeling periods come home from their imaginative flights, and close upon the text that gave them wings, so these poems have each their initial, central, culminating consistency and unity of design. The "Ballad of a Nun," the "Ballad of Heaven," the "Ballad in Blank Verse of the Making of a Poet," with their refrains and repetitions, their returns upon their openings, their striking of the same notes with an emphasis cunningly varied, have a singular lucidity and energy of imaginative thought. In each a situation, an emotion, has been faced and wrestled with and mastered: the solutions are triumphant and satisfying. Where Browning would have written psychological studies, with parry and fence, cut and thrust, of encountering emotions, Mr Davidson chooses rather to throw his problem into a romantic ballad; applying, to subtle and spiritual themes, the direct narrative vigour, and pictorial charm of the ancient ballad story. He is happiest when using stanza and rhyme, especially the four-line octosyllabic stanza. It condenses and constrains his fervent rush of words, which in blank verse is not always under control. Thanks to the necessity of concentration, we have such splendours of phrase as these:

"For still night's starry scroll unfurled,  
And still the day came like a flood:  
It was the greatness of the world  
That made her long to use her blood."

Or, again,

"I care not for my broken vow;  
Though God should come in thunder soon,  
I am sister to the mountains now,  
And sister to the sun and moon."



Or, once more,

“She dared to make herself at home  
Amidst the wail, the uneasy stir.  
The blood-stained flame that filled the dome,  
Scentless and silent, shrouded her.”

One feels that, in a less coercing metre, Mr Davidson might have let his imagination riot amid a wealth of imagery far less impressive than the concise and chiselled beauty of these sudden phrases, left without amplification. All his lyrics have something of this excellent brevity and compression, which seem to bring dignity with them: elsewhere, he falls into phrases unennobled and without strength. Compare Mr Davidson's

“with awe beheld  
A shaven pate mutter a Latin spell  
Over a biscuit,”

with Browning's

“Hear the blessed mutter of the mass  
And see God made and eaten all day long.”

Both are painful; but Browning's phrase has an imaginative irony and audacity in its realism, which lift it above mere crudity. Mr Davidson's phrase has no such justifying power. The “Ballad in Blank Verse,” where it occurs, abounds in resonant passages of beautiful writing, memorable and fine; but, as a whole, it has not the haunting and irresistible fascination of the lyrics. Yet, like all Mr Davidson's poems, it betrays Mr Davidson the novelist and essayist and dramatist, with a tenacious hold upon life, keenly sensitive and observant and imaginative, with humour at once human and fantastic. His “Thirty Bob a Week” and “To the Street Piano,” like his earlier “Music Hall” poems, are written in a vein of curious intelligence, a comprehension of life in certain aspects, commonly treated by poets either with a lachrymose sentiment or a brutal bitter-

ness. Mr Davidson is content to interpret, with a moving sense of their tragi-comedy, human and divine, which stirs us strangely. His very rhythms and measures go with a sublime sort of "vulgarity," with a quaint pitifulness in the Cockney twang, half-jesting and half-despairing, yet defiant all the while. He renders with perfect precision the feeling which street sights and sounds, the pleasure and pain of the struggling crowd, can rouse in us, touching us to a sense of helpless pity, and useless tenderness, and an impulse of love for things "common and unclean." Mr Davidson imports no pathos into these themes, he is unsparing and exact in his presentation; but the old *Homo sum* takes him to the heart of them. Indeed, there is a powerful humanity in all his work: the purely lonesome dream-world of many poets has not drawn him away from earth for long. His "Autumn" is full of the blessings of "mellow fruitfulness," bread for the hungry, the mirth of harvest.

"Let the wain roll home with laughter,  
The pipe! pipe,  
And let the girls come dancing after,  
For once again the earth is ripe."

And when he sings the spring, with its old memories of "merry" England and of mirth under the greenwood tree, of sylvan dance and gaiety, it is with a deeper meaning than meets the eye at first.

"Oh, foolish fancy, feebly strong!  
To England shall we ever bring  
The old muth back? Yes, yes; nor long  
It shall be till that greater Spring;  
And someone yet may make a song  
The birds would like to sing."

In his Ballads there is a curious kind of mystical folklore interwoven with the plain humanity of their motives. He reminds us here a little of Novalis, there a little of Richter; for all the sturdy and straightforward strength

befitting a countryman of Scott, he is yet a poet who has not lived without undergoing its various influences in the age of Rossetti, of "æsthetic poetry," of a "romantic revival," of a "Celtic Renaissance." And he does not shrink from passing out of phantasies into grotesques with a sudden and daring power: power is in all his work, a singular effectiveness, even a sort of sporting with his own power. The "Exodus from Houndsditch," like the "Making of a Poet," is not without its freakishness, a not quite satisfactory caprice. "Be bold! be bold!" is excellent good advice: so is "Be not too bold!" Of most good younger poets just now we often wish that, in Mr Saintsbury's phrase, "the sober blood in their decent veins" would "spurt in a splendid sally." They follow Rossetti or M. Verlaine, Arnold or Mr Bridges, with a very chastened and unambitious pace. But Mr Davidson is superbly ardent and alive, making adventures upon every side of literature: his perils come not from any over-caution. But to compare this volume with its author's earlier *In a Music Hall* is to trace the "progress of poetry" from strength to strength. Few poems in that book, good as it was, had the assured perfection of some poems in this. There are stanzas which haunt the memory as only great art can:

"The adventurous sun took Heaven by storm;  
 Clouds scattered largesses of rain;  
 The sounding cities, rich and warm,  
 Smouldered and glittered in the plain.  
 Sometimes it was a wandering wind,  
 Sometimes the fragrance of the pine,  
 Sometimes the thought how others sinned,  
 That turned her sweet blood into wine."

Indeed, only a poet of no mean order could have so felt and dramatised the "tragedy of the cloister," and the faith in Our Lady, both together, as, in this "Ballad of a Nun," based upon a legend seven hundred years old, Mr

Davidson has done. And though in this volume, small as it is, there are two or three poems markedly beneath the rest, yet even the less excellent have distinction. Mr Davidson's feeling for nature is strongly individual: each little lyric has its felicity of phrase and sentiment, no echo of Tennyson or of Arnold, but fresh from the imagination, deeply impressed, of one with eyes to see for himself, with ears to hear. And the prevailing "philosophy" is his own, with all its questionings, solutions, guesses, dreams, all valorous and fine, though not acceptable to all. In short, Mr Davidson has given his critics that most welcome of gifts, a book which gives them occasion to experience "the noble pleasure of praising"; for, once more to quote Mr Swinburne, it is a book rich beyond a doubt in "the imperishable excellence of sincerity and strength": rich also in graces, that do not always accompany and adorn those excellent virtues.

## NEWS FROM NOWHERE

BY WILLIAM MORRIS

(*The Academy*, 23rd May 1891)

NOT long past, there was published a book, of an ugliness so gross and a vulgarity so pestilent, that it deserved the bonfire and the hangman, the fate of no worse books in a bygone age. The book has been bought by tens of thousands, and by hundreds of thousands, in England and America; clubs and societies have been called after its author's name. That book is *Looking Backward*. It purported to give us an insight into the perfected society of the future; and what we saw was a nightmare spectacle of machinery dominating the world. Yet, despite the ugly and the vulgar features of Mr Bellamy's dream, it was easy to sympathise with his intention: that modern society is far from perfect, that competition can be most cruel, that our conditions of life are restless and mean, few will deny. Whether the preaching of Socialism or of Communism be a happier solution of our difficulties than a strong faith in the virtues of patience, of courage, and of time, is another question. We are all agreed that the existing state of the world is not over-pleasant.

But among all the Utopian or ideal pictures of a reformed world, drawn for our contemplation by enthusiasts, this book by Mr William Morris has a singular charm. It cannot, indeed, rank with the great schemes of Plato, More and Bacon: it has far less perfection of workmanship, less completeness of design, less dignity of tone. But these "Chapters from a Utopian Romance" do not pretend to completeness; they aim at one thing only, the description of an "Epoch of Rest." Life to-day is rest-

less, busy and troubled; full of sordid cares, and wasted by laborious trifles: we hurry and scramble round the world, pushing and hindering one another, losing all the peace and joy of life. Mr Morris here shows us what sort of life he would like to live, what is his conception of the *mens sana in corpore sano*. And from that point of view we will dwell upon the book, with only one remark about the preliminary politics, or the historical origin, of the happy state which it depicts. Mr Morris draws a vivid and, upon the whole, a convincing sketch of the social revolution in its last stages of open conflict, and a no less vivid sketch of its ultimate outcome; he does not tell us the details, nor even sketch outlines, of the most important period, the period of transition. He gives us a dim notion, just a vague glimpse; but so far as his book be meant for more than a beautiful dream, it is here that he is weak. No man, however inclined to fight side by side with Mr Morris, could risk the terrors and the horrors of civil war, unless he had a greater certainty than this book could give him that all the misery and the bloodshed would end in peace and happiness; not in some English version of the French Republic, or even of the American Commonwealth.

But we are not bound to take *News from Nowhere* as a socialist guide book: let us consider it as a vision of the Promised Land. The two chief tenets of this new faith are these: pleasure in work is the secret of art and of content; delight in physical life upon earth is the natural state of man. Whatever interferes with that pleasure, and with that delight, is wrong; work that cannot be done with pleasure, ideas that fill men with despair and gloom, stand self-condemned. We must have no grinding and tyrannous machines of labour; no poisonous and blighting influences of thought. If your factory life makes of you a sickly shadow, or a sullen brute; if your subtle introspection turns you into a barren dreamer, or a moping pessimist: then, says Mr Morris, and surely we all say so too, then away

with those manufactures and with those metaphysics! Life has become endlessly complicated by all sorts of interests and of wants that do not make life happier; we must simplify ourselves, and return to "the primal sanities" of nature. That fine phrase of Mr Whitman describes the spirit of this book: we are sophisticated, let us go home to the early "primal" sources of simplicity and joy; we are perplexed, let us go back to the sources of "sanity" and strength. Upon the relations of art and work, no one is any longer doubtful where the truth lies. Although little advance be made towards the perfect conditions of beautiful workmanship, in theory we are all agreed. But the second point is less firmly recognised. What Browning called "the mere joy of living" becomes less valued every day. Nowadays people seem to pride themselves upon having headaches of body and soul; to relish the sensitiveness of their nerves, their delicate and diseased condition. Effeminate persons give us sonnets upon nature, full of fantastic sentiments and of refined phrases; but a twenty miles' walk or a sleep under the stars would be to them a painfully athletic pleasure. Nor have they that loving and personal regard for the very earth itself which Mr Morris so rightly prizes: that sense for the motherhood of the earth which makes a man love the smell of the fields after rain, or the look of running water. These things, to the modern poet, are so much material for rhyme and metaphor: "rain" and "pain," "stream" and "dream." We have fallen in love with a way of torturing nature into complicity with our vague emotions: we should do well to gain the Homeric simplicity and grandeur of mind, the Lucretian sense of majesty and power, the Virgilian sense of rapture and of glory, in the presence of the natural earth. Mr Morris, from his earliest poems up to this book, has always shown this rightness of mind, this healthy delight in physical existence, because the world is so exhilarating and so lovely. Man has been distinguished from the other animals

in many ways ; not the least distinction is this : that man alone takes a double pleasure in his life upon earth, a pleasure of the mind and of the senses.

Mr Morris, in his account of the reformed world, reminds us of many various authors. Much of his homely affection for the seasonable works of agriculture recalls those "home-spun Georgics," as Southey called them, of Tusser, redolent of the farm and field, full of honest country mirth and manners. Then, again, many phrases in the old man's description of this new Arcady remind us of Athenian writers and ideas : "We live amongst beauty without any fear of becoming effeminate, we have plenty to do, and on the whole enjoy doing it. What more can we ask of life?" It is like Pericles' great speech : Athens, he said, is very admirable, φιλοκαλοῦμεν γὰρ μετ' εὐτελείας καὶ φιλοσοφοῦμεν ἄνευ μαλακίας. Only we cannot help having a general impression that Mr Morris's Utopia or Arcadia, for all its beauty and its energy, would be a little stupid. Perhaps, in his laudable dislike of everything affected or merely academic, Mr Morris represents his ideal folk as under-rating slightly the very joy and pleasure of books and learning. Upon the whole, his conception of man, as he should be, has much in common with Aristotle's : not, of course, in the practical ideas of citizenship and of politics, but in the moral ideas of man's character and business. "A long life of virtuous activity, according to your own nature, and as developed by exercise." Mr Morris would accept that definition of a good life. But it includes the full development of all the faculties ; one faculty cannot do duty for another. One man is good at harvest, and another over painting, and a third in literature ; now Mr Morris at times is inclined to say that, if you are serviceable in the fields, it will do instead of improving your mind with books. It is merely an excess of zeal, in defence of despised and neglected employments, that so makes Mr Morris unjust to those which have been exalted with



exaggeration. There are too many books in the world; we judge too much by a literary standard; we ignore the culture of mind and body in other ways; but good books remain the best things in the world, after the hills and the fields.

The picture of London, embowered in orchards and set with gardens, is very inviting; but there is one thing which in conscience we cannot pass by. Mr Morris classes together as "silly old buildings" and as "poorish buildings" St Paul's and the British Museum; and he speaks of St Martin's-in-the-Fields and of the National Gallery in one breath as "an ugly church" and a "nondescript ugly cupolaed building." That any man, and far more that Mr Morris, should couple together the splendid works of Wren and of Gibbs with the absurd productions of such as Wilkins, is deplorable. There are many men—and I am not ashamed to be one—who, while enjoying and reverencing to the full the medieval masterpieces, would give up a dozen other cathedral churches, could that save St Paul's from destruction. It is bad enough to have Wren's design spoiled by such an abomination as the present reredos; but that is removable. The attack of Mr Morris will remain. Is it that Vitruvian design in architecture is to him very much what "frigid classicality" is in literature? Let me quote the wise words of Mr Selwyn Image:

"Do not go demanding everywhere your own idols. In many shrines learn to worship the Divinity, which is revealed entirely at none. For sensitiveness, for flexibility, for an inexhaustible capacity of appreciation, send up your perpetual prayers."

But there is so much beauty, so much strength, so much sanity in this short book, that our chief thoughts of it must be thoughts of gratitude. Its readers will turn, again and again, to these virile and pleasant pages, and especially to

those which tell of England's natural beauty, of the sylvan Thames, and of the Oxfordshire meadows. Like that other Oxford poet, who loved "the shy Thames shore," Mr Morris consoles and heartens us. We see, our eyes clear of city smoke,

“ Bathed in the sacred dew of morn,  
The wide aerial landscape spread—  
The world which was ere I was born,  
The world which lasts when I am dead ;  
Which never was the friend of *one*,  
Nor promised love it could not give,  
But lit for all its generous sun,  
And lived itself, and made us live.”

## MARCELLA

BY MRS HUMPHRY WARD

(*The Academy*, 5th May 1894)

THAT *Marcella* is a good novel, and a very much better novel than *Robert Elsmere* or *David Grieve*, would seem to be the unanimous verdict of its readers. It may be not amiss to consider the reasons of this clear superiority to its predecessors.

Mrs Humphry Ward, in a quaint preface to *David Grieve*, defended with great energy her choice of theme and treatment in that book, and in *Robert Elsmere*. Undoubtedly fiction in prose has been successfully written with so infinite a variety of aims and ideals, written so lightly and loosely, so sternly and strictly, so waywardly and airily, so straightforwardly and precisely, that it is impossible to say what is or is not a novel: what a novel may or may not contain. But one thing is certain. If a novel be fantastic, capricious, a curious combination of humour and philosophy, and wisdom and wit, constantly digressing and divagating, a thing of whims and fancies: why, if the writer be a writer of genius, he may discuss the differential calculus or Home Rule, death duties or the North Pole, at any point in his narrative. But if a writer sets out with certain strong convictions concerning matters in which the truth, whatever it be, is a question of spiritual life and death to the majority of civilised men—matters, too, intimately connected with scholarship and learning of many kinds—then a fair treatment of those matters in a novel is impossible. A man's loss of faith in traditional Christianity is a possible theme for a novelist, if minute detail, points of critical scholarship, be avoided,

and the tragedy, or tragi-comedy, be presented with the strong and human features of its spiritual drama. But some readers of *Robert Elsmere* were perpetually leaving their chairs to consult their books: "Yes! but So-and-so has answered that in his first chapter." "That view is shaken by the discovery of such-and-such a document." "They are beginning to question it in Germany." "Perhaps so, but even the Vatican Decrees do not demand that." "Where did I put the last number of the Something-or-other?" Now, few readers care to read novels under those conditions. Imagine a novel turning upon a scholar's change of view about the Homeric problem, written by an ardent advocate of the "advanced" view: imagine the scholarly reader exclaiming, "Very likely, but Wilamowitz-Moellendorff is not infallible," and "Wolf would not maintain that now." It would have been possible to let the reader understand that critical studies in history had destroyed Elsmere's old faith, without any unfair or inartistic treatment of the matter; but Mrs Ward was not content with that. She introduced definite examples of the historical difficulties, in a way necessarily superficial, and therefore unfair. It would have been at once fairer and more artistic, more reverent and more scholarly, to have prefaced the story by a reasoned and elaborate essay upon the question. As it is, the treatment hurts the feelings of orthodox Christians, and must irritate those of scholars, orthodox or not. A second blemish was the description of the orthodox Christians. Consumptive, emaciated, hectic, wasted, unearthly, gaunt, worn, thin, starving, ascetic, mystical, passionate, vehement, agonised, ardent and uncritical—these were the adjectives. Their eyes were dreamy and bright, their hands long and thin, their voices had a vibrating intensity. They were often most lovable, and had a magnetic charm of personality. The intellect was a snare to them, and they fled from the learning of Germany with a *Vade Satana!* Newcome,

the High Church vicar, "had the saint's wasted unearthly look, the ascetic's brow high and narrow"; when he appealed to Elsmere, it was with "a hurricane of words hot from his inmost being." Wishart, the young Liberal Catholic convert, was "a pale, small, hectic creature, possessed of that restless energy of mind which often goes with the heightened temperature of consumption." He poured forth "a stream of argument and denunciation which had probably lain lava-hot at the heart of the young convert for years." Ancrum was a valetudinarian, sinking out of sheer exhaustion into the arms of Rome. Catherine Elsmere and Dora Lomax were womanly and devout and strong, but with something of a mulish obstinacy in their religion. It was always a religion of passionate dreams passionately believed. Mrs Ward's orthodox Christians were amusing to her orthodox readers; but as representatives of orthodoxy, they seemed somewhat inadequate caricatures.

*Marcella* has none of these defects, or of defects like them; no political economist, no social reformer, will impatiently put the book down to confute its reasonings out of Mill or Marx. No class of politicians, or of social theorists, is represented by obviously unfair examples: no one is intolerably and divinely right, no one pathetically and stubbornly wrong. No reader can say that whole chapters should have been cast into an independent essay or pamphlet. Yet the story is no less ardent and earnest than its predecessors: like them, it deals with matters of immense importance, matters keenly debatable and extremely difficult; like them, it is full of human passion and spiritual trial, full of conflict and love and death. Unlike them, it is a good novel: they were but novels with good things plentiful in them: this novel is a satisfying whole. It is largely planned, some readers may think too largely and elaborately. Even so, the workmanship may be held atonement enough for the elaboration. Mrs Ward

is not of those fashionable writers whose agitation over their psychology makes them ignore their grammar. There is an occasional excess of phrase, overwrought expressions and an encumbering weight of words; but never any clumsy carelessness, no huddled jumble of sentences, unrhythmical and disproportioned. Of all the general impressions made upon the reader by Mrs Ward's book, the strongest impression is that here is very careful work. Perhaps no impression is less commonly left by modern writers. Mrs Ward's novels are written with a very vigilant eye to demonstrating the necessity of "conduct," of a resolute morality, of a care for the things of the spirit; but what human, what delightful worldliness, what a sense of living forces, the writer brings to her task! The background, environment, atmosphere, whatever be the right word, are admirable in their reality and truth. "Society," the "masses," the "landed class," the "political world," the "old families," the "new generation," the "labour movement," Mrs Ward may depict them rightly or wrongly, but her portraiture is enchantingly alive. M. Jusserand, the latest writer upon Langland and "Piers Plowman," dwells upon Langland's feeling for crowds of men, the miscellaneous and moving multitudes, the variegation of life, its human stir, but with the varieties distinctly shown :

"Langland nous fournit ainsi ce qu'on ne trouve chez aucun de ses contemporains: des foules, des groupes, des classes, vivants et individualisés: classe marchande, monde religieuse, Communes d'Angleterre."

Mrs Ward's books are masterly work, seriously to be considered, comfortably to be enjoyed; the abominable amateur of cleverness has had no hand in them. One can fancy Dr Johnson rolling out sonorous condemnation of certain monstrously fashionable novels of to-day,

somewhat in this manner: "Madam, you have not atoned for the tedium of your narration by the novelty of your morals, nor for the disorder of your style by the indecorum of your sentiments." But though we may dislike Mrs Ward's stories, we cannot be disrespectful nor contemptuous towards them. Even the vitriolic and vivacious exquisites of criticism, who flout the "earnest" novel as only fit for "Brixton parlours," cannot flout away the honourable excellence of *Marcella*.

As in its predecessors, so in *Marcella*, the burden of the story is the progress of some strenuous soul towards reason, patience, self-discipline: a regulated and well-grounded ardour, as Mrs Ward comprehends and realises them. Difficulty! that is the characteristic word: the recognition of complexities in life: an ordeal never ended, always to be endured: a testing and a purifying of fine gold in the fire. There is a moral collision of two fine natures, with a shock rending the hearts of both: on one side, clear-eyed and wise patience, strong to stand firm, in spite of passion persuading, not ignobly, the contrary course; on the other side, a vehement spirit of protest, revolt, impatient conviction, born of a not ignoble intolerance of a sad wisdom, just, and proof against the folly of an emotion, unjust in its very generosity. On one side Aldous Raeburn, on the other Marcella Boyce; common to both, a sense of social disorder, sorrow, trouble. Aldous has the "strength to sit still," the power to serve, if need be, while he "stands and waits": a depth of moral purpose, a depth of mental courage, a depth of emotional sincerity. Marcella has the storm and stress of youth, inexperience, personal ambition and headlong sympathy. Both have family pride: Aldous in its finer form of real "nobility," implying responsibility; Marcella in the more sentimental form, picturesque and vivid, less assured and unassertive. Her father's conduct in earlier life had outcast him from his equals: she had been brought up apart from her parents, a prey to her childish cravings for

sympathy, full of nervous passion, impressionable and restless and expectant. She falls in with "Venturist" socialism in her London youth, with an exciting Bohemianism of thought and feeling: her beauty, ardour, pride, give her visions of becoming a Saint Teresa, a Joan of Arc, to "the social movement," the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Her father's succession to the old place in the country brings her front to front with village life, as a field for her half-unconscious patronage and whole genuine commiseration. Aldous Raeburn, heir to a great estate and title, living hard by with his grandfather, falls in love with her, discerning her better than she knows herself. And at this point begins the active drama of the book, which we will not attempt to tell. It is enough to say that Aldous and Marcella are parted by the means that joined them, their common concentration upon social difficulties. As she was passionately prejudiced by her personal feelings of compassion in the matter that separated them, so also her love for him was at heart a yielding to personal ambition. At the end, great suffering, a quickening of her conscience and deepening of her mind, a purgation in manifold and multiform trials of life, bring her back to him. She had passed through the fires.

A number of admirable characters assist in the drama. The most memorable is Harry Wharton, "gentleman labour leader," young and able, and all that the part seems to demand. His character is one of the most masterly and natural in recent fiction. Honestly a champion of the poor; intellectually and emotionally a social reformer of "advanced and progressive" views; winning and buoyant, a notable personality, he sells his labour journal to a syndicate of capitalists at the crisis of a great strike which he has fostered. He sells it to relieve his personal necessities, largely due to gambling debts incurred at a very aristocratic and retiring haunt. He is a familiar figure at great gatherings of "society," a favourite with



great Tory dames and magnates of all kinds. He wins Marcella to his side by maintaining with equal fervour and far greater knowledge her policy of "thorough." The discovery of his conduct, no surprise to Aldous and others, acquaintances of his early youth, was among her severest wounds: she had almost loved him. Seldom has a novelist portrayed with finer truth the divorce between intellect and conscience, between sentimental public sympathies and cynical private selfishness. A divorce; yet the elements and various strains so subtly intermix and overlap that the character is always easy, unforced, persuasive. The expositor of "Hohenstiel-Schwangau" would have enjoyed the exposure of Harry Wharton. Edward Hallin is less masterly, because he is the whitest of white souls: the scholar-priest of social reform, neither scholar nor priest by profession, but very much of both in his life. He is the idealist with a grasp of facts: the sternest of believers in the strength of justice, truth, complete and absolute honesty. The Cambridge friend of Aldous, he inspired Aldous with his spirit, the spirit that never compromises with half lies and expedient immoralities, and the "necessary" insincerities of public life. A little more insistence upon his virtues, and he would have been a tedious saint, an Aristides: as it is, he is pleasant and human and pathetic. He stands over against Wharton, as an influence upon Marcella; and he is throughout, by his influence, the better and guardian angel of her and Aldous in their love. Mrs Boyce, Marcella's mother, is an impressive figure; whether she be an acceptable figure or not is less obvious. Her husband's disgrace killed her pride in him, and her joy in existence: she lived apart, unapproachable, but not repellent. She lived in her past, she loved Dante, she was no cynic; but she was a quietly embittered spectator of the life about her, a little ironical and very lovable, whilst neither wanting nor accepting any love but that of her irritable and no longer brilliant

husband. Aldous's grandfather, Lord Maxwell, is as stately an old noble of a type familiar both in literature and in life, as his sister is a narrow and dignified lady unable to comprehend "modern notions." The labour leaders, the "Venturist" theorists, all the examples of rugged force, or democratic culture, or self-educated enthusiasm, or business-like energy, devoted in various ways to the solution of "the social problem," are happily drawn; they are neither idealised, nor caricatured, nor yet presented with indifference. They help to illustrate the complexity of our tangled life, the characters and natures of the powers at work in it: the necessity of the work, the partiality and imperfection of all methods, apart from honesty and knowledge and faith. The book seems to suggest that the co-operation of the highest qualities of all classes can alone do any good: to suggest, for the book, though intensely moral, is not didactic. In the play of life upon life, the personal struggles of men and women, with their humour and gravity, hope and fear, sorrow and joy, all very human and alive, *Marcella* succeeds and satisfies. It has an abundant brilliance of scenes, either passionate or amusing. Here is a rendering of modern life, crowded and moving, in which high tragedy and excellent comedy take their parts, each with a bearing upon the other that is true to life and true to art.

## ONE OF OUR CONQUERORS

BY GEORGE MEREDITH

(*The Academy*, 13th June 1891)

THE works of a writer past the prime of life are apt to display a certain excess or extravagance: what was once his strength has now become his weakness, and his virtue has changed into his vice. This is most often seen in the case of very strong and masterful writers; those whose good work is all done in some one *annus mirabilis*, or flowering season, fall into mere decay, as Coleridge or as Wordsworth. It is in writers whose whole life has been full of successful toil and untiring effort, that manner degenerates into mannerism. Such writers, and, indeed, all artists of such a kind, are often men who have discovered some new way in art, and who possess a secret and a power proper to themselves; the world, used to the old and familiar ways, will not at once take notice of them. In proportion to their faith in themselves and their fidelity to their art, these artists, unshaken and undeterred, continue upon their way, rather increasing than relaxing their unappreciated labours. Slowly and gradually the world comes round to their side, is converted to their faith, welcomes them with applause. But what of the artists, all this long time? Is there no danger that, in a kind of unconscious defiance and challenge, they will have gone too far, and grown enamoured of that in their work which the world did well to blame? If the world cried out upon their obscurity, where there was some obscurity but not much, was it not natural in them to have replied with worse obscurities, out of an impatient contempt and exasperation? It is permissible to think that Browning had a little of this feeling, when he filled his

later books with so much more argument than imagination. Landor dared to think that Milton, in *Paradise Regained*, was "subject to strange hallucinations of the ear." Now, Milton held, although the world does not, that *Paradise Regained* is superior to *Paradise Lost*. It is as though, foreseeing the "revel of rhyme" that was to supersede his greater harmonies, he gathered himself together, and went nigh to straining the resources of his rhythm beyond its just capacity.

It has been said of late that Mr Meredith, in his new book, has likewise exhibited "the defects of his qualities"; that his former work reached the farthest limits of successful audacity, and that *One of Our Conquerors* has passed beyond them. Cordial and enthusiastic admirers of Mr Meredith are ringing the changes upon "wilful eccentricity" and "wanton obscurity" and "lack of proportion in design." Since the present writer is unable to share these opinions, it is incumbent upon him to acknowledge that, upon reading the book for the first time, he did not reckon it a masterpiece. Read three or four times, the book grows upon the reader, the apparent confusion disappears, the intricacies of design become intelligible, and the whole greatness of design is evident. Hasty impression yields to careful meditation.

Let us take, first, a question of style: is *One of Our Conquerors* written in a style of grotesque and perverted eccentricity, whilst *Richard Feverel* or *The Egoist* is full of true force and beauty? That can be maintained only by one who has not read Mr Meredith's earlier books for a year at least; one who retains a sense of their greatness, forgetting all but their final and permanent effect. Again, he who maintains that view must have ignored this fact: that with Mr Meredith style and subject change or grow together. In proportion as the subject is simple, or idyllic, or tragic, or humorous, or rapid, so does the style assume those qualities. If the chief influences brought to bear

upon the chief characters be influences of the great and busy world, of crowded and complicated life, then the style reflects the nature of those influences. All Mr Meredith's books are full of stir and animation ; but three of them, in especial, are full of this general or social life, this business and animation felt in the very atmosphere. In *Beauchamp's Career*, and *Diana of the Crossways*, and *One of Our Conquerors*, it is not too much to say that "the world," or "society," or "the public," or "the nation," seems to rank among the *dramatis personæ*. Now, most English writers who wish to make an effect of this kind, to suffuse their work with this breath of the general life, attempt it by pages of reflection and description, in which the words are abstract and the sentences are sentiments. Unless the writer be very skilful, his writing will be very dull ; at the best, it will too often be mere rhetoric. But Mr Meredith differs in this from almost every other novelist of eminence : that he sees thoughts as things, emotions as images, the abstract as the concrete. He has eyes for the form and colour of an idea ; he presents it to us full of life. It is now a truism to say that a cause is identical with its effects ; but the illustration may help us out. When an ordinary writer gives us an idea, he gives it us in a dull and sparing way ; the implicit truth is there, but it remains implicit : he states, as it were, a cause. Mr Meredith states the effects, the explicit operations of the cause ; the thought is expressed in concrete terms. His lively phrases are not metaphorical, but logical ; the ideas are translated into their equivalent expressions in actual life. Those readers are surely wrong who regard Mr Meredith's characteristic phrases as so many attempts at epigram and wit. Critics have published lists of Mr Meredith's "failures" in epigram. They might as well be called his failures in epic. All such characteristic phrases are rather faithful translations of general and abstract ideas into expressions of their concrete contents of meaning ; translations by a

humorist, whose humour need not relish the phrase, which may be ludicrous, but the act of making it, the discovery that, do but examine such and such an idea and the phrase will be found to express it. So that when Mr Meredith is accused of straining after wit, he is in reality but keeping close to facts, which is apt to be a grimly serious form of humour. It may not be amiss to compare with Mr Meredith's manner of expressing ideas, his manner of expressing nature. His poems, for keenness of sight, for close contact with the most precise details, have few rivals: and here he reverses his process, and from an expression of the visible or the audible in nature, he passes to its meaning for man in thought. In this way he keeps touch with both sides of life: real and ideal, analytic and synthetic; he cannot understand one without the other.

As is always the case with all true writers, the consideration of Mr Meredith's style passes insensibly into that of his subject. It may be assumed that most readers of *The Academy* are now acquainted with *One of our Conquerors*; so that, instead of a lame description of the book, we may consider one or two points which are of the greatest interest. To begin with Victor Radnor, and his position. When a young man, he, to put it with all possible crudity, married an old woman for her money. Certain critics have cried "Cad!" and refused to consider the possibility of his ever afterwards redeeming that dishonourable act of youthful folly. Such a criticism shows the inadequacy of petrified moral codes. Victor's act was not merely an offence against conventional laws of honour, which change with time, but immutable laws of nature; and his next act was in defiance of conventional law, but in harmony with reason and with nature. He took for his true wife, in all but legal rights, a woman prepared to obey her nature and his. The first wrong to nature is redressed by a disregard of convention. Now, all this talk about nature and conventionality might, in the case of a weak writer, have been

no more than a somewhat nauseous cant, in the least desirable style of Rousseau. But Mr Meredith—need it be said?—ignores nothing. With a conception of tragic art and of moral law, which is among his greatest achievements, he shows us the failure of both father and mother, Victor and Nataly. Victor is too enamoured of the world which he has defied and coaxed, and Nataly too afraid of it. But he also shows us their triumph, in their child, in Nesta. We agree with Colney Durance when

“he considered the shallowness of the abstract Optimist exposed enough in Victor’s history. He was reconciled to it when, looking on their child, he discerned that, for a cancelling of the errors chargeable to them, the father and mother had kept faith with Nature.”

Nesta—neither cherishing a prosperous superstition about the world based upon worldly success, nor a shrinking fear and deference bred of one noble disloyalty to convention—can face the world upon fair terms. She neither accepts its stupid prose nor dreams over its false poetry; but, interpreting the reason in nature, she has every true power upon her side. Mr Meredith has drawn more portraits and characters of true women than any other Englishman but Shakespeare and Browning; Nesta is, it may be thought, the truest of them all:

“Thou hast left behind  
Powers that will work for thee—air, earth, and skies;  
There’s not a breathing of the common wind  
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;  
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,  
And love, and man’s unconquerable mind.”

The lines came into our mind, when reading the last pages of the book, as applicable to the woman who, with all her zeal upon unpopular sides and for bold causes, never lost tolerance for the world of folly and of intolerance, except only “when she thought of it as the world condemning her mother.”

## EIGHTEENTH CENTURY VIGNETTES

By AUSTIN DOBSON

(*The Academy*, 10th December 1892)

STEELE'S Letters, Prior's Kitty, Spence's Anecdotes, Captain Coram's Charity, The Female Quixote, Fielding's Voyage to Lisbon, Hanway's Travels, A Garret in Gough Square, Hogarth's Sigismunda, The Citizen of the World, An Old London Bookseller, Gray's Library, The New Chesterfield, A Day at Strawberry Hill, Goldsmith's Library, In Cowper's Arbour, The Quaker of Art, Bewick's Tailpieces, A German in England, Old Vauxhall Gardens—these are Mr Dobson's themes. Now, the best classification of scholars and of critics is under two heads: those who do, and those who do not, adore the eighteenth century. To its votaries and devotees it is the enchanted, the golden, the incomparable age: our dearest friends lived in it, and our best books were written in it. We know that the ages of Shakespeare and of Milton were greater far than the age of Addison and of Pope, of Johnson and of Burke, of Berkeley and of Gray, of Fielding and of Richardson: we acknowledge the exceeding glory of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats; but for pure and genuine pleasure we turn most often and most gladly to the age of the golden mean. Glover's *Leonidas* does not depress us; we can stomach Beattie on Truth; Home's *Douglas* and Mason's *Caractacus* are positively our delights. In the meanest last-century book there is something of urbanity, atticism, grace, composure, ease; some felicity of arrangement or charm of manner: the hireling pens of pamphleteers, the pensioned Grub-Street Muses, have a pleasant way of seeming scholarly and grave, or bright and witty. Critics and controversialists, whose whole aim was



a brutal bludgeoning or filthy bespattering of their opponents, yet kept about them some air of taste and art. The vile thing was done with a certain happy congruity, a certain dexterous and able grace. For myself, let me confess that the literature of the last century has few dull places: deistical treatises, Christian evidences, third-rate essayists, Odes to Solitude, I can enjoy them all. In a word, the bad writing of the last century is more tolerable than that of any other century; it shows more of the craftsman, the artist, the master of composition and design.

What, then, must be the joy of such an enthusiast for the unenthusiastic century when he reads Mr Dobson upon some of the best and greatest charms of that century! After toiling through volumes of a horrid modernity, all weeping and wailing, all fire and frenzy, I turn to the eighteenth century, as Herrick from his hated Devon turned to London:

"I send, I send here my supremest kiss  
To thee, my silver-footed Thamasis!"

Like Dr Birkbeck Hill, that master of last-century literature and true servant of its great writers, I "find in their exquisitely clear style, their admirable common sense, and their freedom from all the tricks of affectation, a delightful contrast to so many of the eminent authors of our own time." And Mr Dobson has here put together twenty brief and winning sketches of much that is most dear and pleasant in the arts and letters of his cherished age. All are good, some "choicely good"; let us dwell a short while upon each of them.

Mr Dobson's vignette of Steele is not unworthy to be set beside Thackeray's larger portraits in *Esmond* and in the *Lectures*: it should help to keep alive that interest in Sir Richard lately awakened by the publication of an admirable biography. Mr Dobson, by a few judicious strokes, puts before us the most lovable of wits and worthies: the bustling, sensitive, pleasant creature, of

whom Dr Johnson could say nothing severer than: "Steele, I believe, practised the lighter vices." Even the ridiculous Colley Cibber, in his suit against Steele, informs the Master of the Rolls: "Sir, the Case, in plain Truth and Reality, stands thus: Sir Richard, though no Man alive can write better of Economy than himself, yet perhaps, he is above the Drudgery of practising it." There is hardly any English author more praised, and by more people, for his good nature: "he was," said Young, "the best-natured creature in the world: even in his worst state of health, he seemed to desire nothing but to please and be pleased." His letters to his "Dear Prue," their simple affection, humorous honesty, and touches of very tender sentiment, have well inspired Mr Dobson to sketch some scenes and ways in the life of this "clever, faulty, kindly" man.

Prior's "Kitty" is her Grace, the famous Duchess of Queensberry, a lady whose charm and beauty were proverbial. Some men are so afraid of being conventional, says Young, that they blush to be found out in a truism:

"If they by chance blurt out, ere well aware,  
A swan is white, or Queensberry is fair."

"Kitty, beautiful and young," is a fascinating figure: Prior, Gay, Pope, Swift were her worshippers; her humours make a charming diversion in "the artificial century." There must have been something very winsome and pleasantly provoking about her Grace; something very generous and upright about her husband, Thomson's "worthy Queensberry," who "yet laments his Gay." Thackeray has hit off excellently Gay's lazy life at Amesbury, under this ducal patronage:

"With these kind lordly folks, a real Duke and Duchess, as delightful as those who harboured Don Quixote, and loved that dear old Sancho, Gay lived, and was lapped in cotton, and had his plate of chicken,

and his saucer of cream, and frisked, and barked, and wheezed, and grew fat, and so ended."

"How comes it," asked Pope, "that providence has been so unkind to me (who am a greater object of compassion than any fat man alive) that I am forced to drink wine, while you riot in water prepar'd with oranges by the hand of the Duchess of Queensberry? That I am condemned to live by a highway side, like an old Patriarch receiving all guests, where my Portico (as Virgil has it) *Mane salutantum totis vomit aedibus undam*, while you are wrapt into the Idalian groves, sprinkled with rose-water, and live in burrage, balm, and burnet up to the chin, with the Duchess of Queensberry? That I am doom'd to the drudgery of dining at court with the ladies in waiting at Windsor, while you are happily banish'd with the Duchess of Queensberry?"

Swift's correspondence with the duchess and with Gay, as Mr Dobson observes, has been variously judged; I must own to finding it delightful. All Swift's envious and savage contempt, his mock humility, condescending playfulness and rare strokes of true tenderness are in his letters to the great lady, whom he has not seen since she was five years old. There are few pleasanter things in fiction than Smollett's bringing Mr Matthew Bramble and his companions to Drumlanrig, the Queensberry seat in Scotland, which "puts one in mind of the beautiful city of Palmyra." The duke was all courtesy; "the duchess was equally gracious, and took our ladies under her immediate protection." Prior's "Kitty" entertaining Mrs Tabitha Bramble! "She died in Savile Row in 1777, of a surfeit of cherries, and was buried at Durrisdeer": a name which takes us away from Smollett and *Humphry Clinker* to Mr Stevenson and *The Master of Ballantrae*.

Spence is our next figure. "An extreme poor creature,"

says the courteous Warburton, to whom the gentle, amiable scholar must have been very contemptible. It is Pope, of course, who has kept Spence alive, because it is Spence who has made Pope so living. But the *Anecdotes* are full of other interests, and their bibliography is a curious piece of history. Singer's edition was published in 1820, upon the same day as Malone's; but my own copy was presented by Singer to "The Right Honourable Sir George Campbell" upon 15th August 1819, which seems to show that "advance copies" were in existence very early, the title page being dated 1820, and the preface December 1819. As Johnson has somewhat extinguished Boswell, so Pope has extinguished Spence, who deserves, perhaps, a little more attention than he has commonly received. Every one of his greater critics has been severe upon him:

"At Captain M'Lean's I mentioned Pope's friend, Spence.

JOHNSON: He was a weak, conceited man.

BOSWELL: A good scholar, sir?

JOHNSON: Why, no, sir.

BOSWELL: He was a pretty scholar.

JOHNSON: You have about reached him."

Gray echoes Johnson:

"I remember to have read Mr Spence's pretty book. . . . If you ask me what I read, I protest I do not recollect one syllable; but only in general, that they were the best bred sort of men in the world, just the kind of *frinds* one would wish to meet in a fine summer's evening, if one wished to meet any at all. The heads and tails of the dialogues, published separate in 16mo, would make the sweetest reading in *natiur* for young gentlemen of family and fortune, that are learning to dance."

And he criticises the *Polymetis* very much in the tone of Lessing, whose references to it in the *Laocoon* are very

frequent. Lessing ascribes to him "much classical erudition," and "a very trustworthy acquaintance with the latest works of ancient art"; but he maintains that "to every reader of taste his book must be absolutely intolerable." Spence took up the precisely opposite method in criticism to that of Lessing; and it is true, as Mr Dobson observes, that Lemprière superseded him. Spence would be glad to think that his successor was also a Wykehamist. For *vir doctissimus Josephus Spence*, as another fellow Wykehamist, Lowth, termed him, "Dear Jo," as most of his correspondents called him, "Dear Spanco," as young Lord Middlesex addressed him, was a very patriotic Wykehamist, and one of an interesting little group of literary Wykehamists: Young, Pitt, Spence, the laureate Whitehead, Lowth, "Muscipula" Holdsworth, Theophilus Cibber the actor, brother of Colley; that most attractive youth, Harrison, whose early death was bitterly lamented by Swift; Joseph Warton, Collins and others. The earlier of these were patronised by Bubb Dodington, and, like Thomson and Voltaire, knew well "the pure Dorsetian downs" at Eastbury. They resemble, in many ways, the quadruple alliance of Etonians: Gray, Walpole, West and Ashton. Surely Mr Dobson is incorrect in saying that Pitt translated Homer? His translation of Virgil is fairly well known, and not without its merits. In his fastidious tastes, Italian culture, gentle humour and grace, Spence seems to me a Gray without Gray's genius: a kindly soul, who passed his days in benevolence, helping the Queen's threshing poet and librarian of the grotto, Stephen Duck; assisting Thomson; charitable towards the blind poet and scholar, Dr Blacklock; and, as Swift "charitably sneers," in "fondling an old mother—in imitation of Pope!" At least, we are greatly in his debt for those solemn and tragic pages in which he tells us of Pope's wasting away to death, while Bolingbroke bursts into tears, accuses Heaven, and cries out many times: "O great God! what is man?"

Captain Coram's Charity, otherwise the Foundling Hospital, is treated by Mr Dobson very genially. The old seaman's pleasant memory deserved this tribute. The place is redolent of famous recollections: of Handel and of Hogarth, above all. That irascible little artist writes:

"The portrait I painted with the most pleasure, and in which I particularly wished to excel, was that of Captain Coram for the Foundling Hospital; and if I am so wretched an artist as my enemies assert, it is somewhat strange, that this, which was one of the first I painted the size of life, should stand the test of twenty years' competition, and be generally thought the best portrait in the place, notwithstanding the first painters in the kingdom exerted all their talents to vie with it."

Mr Dobson recalls Thackeray's use of the old place in *Vanity Fair*, and his residence hard by; Dickens also has kept up the Captain's memory by his strange creature, Tattycoram, in *Little Dorrit*; while he also lived in the same quaint and quiet old neighbourhood. And did not Mr Kenwigs desire his defrauded infants to be taken away to the "Fondling"?

I suppose no place in old London is so constantly mentioned in old literature as the Apollo room at the Devil, by Temple Bar: the dramatists revel in allusions to it. But few stranger scenes, even in Ben's roaring days, can have taken place there than that which Mr Dobson next describes—the coronation of Mrs Charlotte Lennox by Dr Johnson, upon the publication of her first novel. The doctor, for inexplicable reasons, held her superior to the Grecian Mrs Carter, the moral Miss More, and the vivacious Miss Burney. Goldsmith wrote an epilogue to her play, and was curiously asked, so he told Johnson, to hiss the play in honour of Shakespeare, whom the lady had treated lightly in her *Shakespeare Illustrated*. She is one

of his few contemporaries whom Johnson honoured by quotation in the *Dictionary*. Her famous book, *The Female Quixote*, is quite unreadable now, and, spite of Johnson and of Fielding, ought to have been so from the first. But she gave occasion for that inimitable description of the famous revel by the pompous knight, Sir John Hawkins: a revel of tea, coffee and lemonade upon Johnson's part; the other guests obeyed the "convivial laws" of his early namesake:

"Let no sober bigot here think it a sin,  
To push on the chirping and moderate bottle";

and the injunctions of Drayton in the same place:

"Let not a man drinke, but in draughts profound;  
To our God Phoebus let the health go round."

Fielding's *Voyage to Lisbon* is the next in this goodly collection: a praise of a most manly, spirited, pathetic and neglected masterpiece, by the master whom Mr Henley does well in calling "worthy to dispute the palm with Cervantes and Sir Walter as the heroic man of letters." That humorous and lusty vagrant, Borrow, made the same voyage on his ludicrous mission of spreading "scripture knowledge" in Spain: a mission in which the Protestant archbishop of Dublin has rashly followed him. Upon landing in Lisbon, Borrow exhorts travellers to "repair to the English church and cemetery, Père-la-chaise in miniature, where, if they be of England, they may well be excused if they kiss the cold tomb, as I did, of the author of *Amelia*, the most singular genius which their island ever produced, whose works it has long been the fashion to abuse in public and to read in secret." He quaintly adds: "In the same cemetery rest the mortal remains of Doddridge, another English author of a different stamp, but justly admired and esteemed." Mr Dobson, indeed, will hardly allow the *Journal* to be "a literary masterpiece"; yet I can use no other term of a work so enchanting in its fine simplicity and courageous temper.

We pass on to a very different traveller : Jonas Hanway, philanthropist and hater of tea, moralist and patron of the umbrella. A portentous scribbler, and excellent man ! His travels, abroad and at home, are only remembered by Johnson's witticisms. Mr Dobson has not exaggerated the truly repellent character of the latter, the journey from Portsmouth to Kingston : an eight days' journey, says Hawkins, told in two octave volumes. Mr Dobson pleasantly describes his purchase of this work in Holborn, a presentation copy to two ladies, embellished with some abominable verse in Hanway's autograph. The only good thing to be said of Hanway's works is that they are perpetually surprising the reader ; the titles of Montaigne's Essays are not more delusive. I lately bought, in Holborn also, two volumes of Hanway, with a title-page of sixty-two words ; except for a charming frontispiece by Major, the volumes are deadly in their diffuse dullness. Now and then we have delightful references to "the much admired Mr Dodd," that rascally parson who seems to have preached charity sermons from his cradle to his gallows ; or to "Mr Whitefield at Tottenham Court," whom, with the sect called Methodists, Mr Hanway does most vehemently revile. He followed, or preceded, Bishop Lavington upon the same theme, and makes the amazing statement that

"in Cromwell's time it is well-known that the *Popish* clergy, disguised as *Reformers*, found their way to our pulpits, and we must not be surprised if the same should happen again amongst the Methodists."

Of which the sober English is, in Newman's words, that Wesley was "the shadow of a Catholic saint." But this wearisome, odd scribbler was a man of most real and practical charity ; and Mr Dobson has dealt kindly with his ways and works.

"A Garrett in Gough Square" describes one of the many London homes of Hanway's great antagonist, that champion



of tea, whose melancholy disorders, like those of Cowper, may have been increased by his indulgence in "the cups that cheer, but not inebriate," as Cowper sang, "conveying" the phrase from Bishop Berkeley. It is a dignified portrait of the great man's habitation, with touching reverence for his sorrows and cares, with a brave vindication of his literary excellences. Let us hope that Mr Dobson will do something to dissipate the tiresome superstition that Johnson's works are a ponderous mass of affected and pedantic verbosity. The flippant persons who are ever prating of the *Rambler's* heavy dullness would be surprised to find, by experiment, how bright and vigorous is the better part of it. But Johnson has worthy champions in this age; to them we may leave him.

Hogarth's *Sigismunda*, that tragical piece, is the next subject. And what more can be said than Mr Dobson has said? He tells all the petty quarrels and misadventures that surround its history. Let me tell one little fact which would have enraptured poor Hogarth. The present writer lately spent a morning at the National Gallery, and came to the *Sigismunda*. Two men, of rusty and ragged appearance, stood in front of it. Said one to the other: "We've been through the whole show, and I say it's the best of the lot. Look at the woman's eyes!"

Mr Dobson's remarks upon *The Citizen of the World* are naturally full of zeal and of love for the author, whom he has served in so many ways. The suggestion that these incomparable sketches were suggested by Walpole's anonymous Chinese pamphlet seems extremely probable: it is just the kind of hint which Goldsmith's genius so often wanted to set it working. One can scarcely say too much in praise of Goldsmith's essays: they resemble Addison and Steele on this side, Fielding and Dickens on that; yet they have an incommunicable air of distinction wholly their own: a delicacy and simplicity, a natural felicity, which stamp them as original. Goldsmith's exquisite verse, much as it

owes to others, has precisely the same quality and distinction: a kind of innocent, pleasant grace and ease and charm, with touching passages of deep sentiment here and there, whilst all is musical and mellow, perfectly finished and wrought out.

Another paper is upon Goldsmith's Library; and it is curious to reflect that Goldsmith, like Racine, as Mr Dobson notes, or like Browning, as he might have noted, appears to have kept no copies of his own works. The paper upon Gray's Library is a very different record; the dainty Cambridge scholar, the fastidious recluse or delicate worldling, was a born bookman. Mr Dobson remarks upon his careful collection of MS. music from Italy: in this Gray resembles Milton, who brought home a similar collection. Indeed, Milton, "The Lady of Christ's" and "Miss Gray of Peterhouse" are well worth comparing in their Italian travels and studies.

"An Old London Bookseller" is a sketch of Newbery, once a familiar name with children: a shrewd, genial figure of a man, with his eternal Dr James's Powder, and his childish classics. All the last-century children's books are charming and pretty; and even Mrs Trimmer has at least one masterpiece. Newbery, like Cowper's Johnson, and Pope's Lintot, and Johnson's Cave, is one of the many booksellers who make the old annals of "The Trade" such pleasant reading.

"The New Chesterfield" is, in part, an apology for that elegant and polite writer who has been the scorn of stern moralists this many a year. Mr Dobson shows that much of the notorious Letters is excellently moral and true; and he pleads, as only the singer of "a fine old-fashioned grace" could plead, that

"the finished elegance, the watchful urbanity, the perfect ease and self-possession which Fielding commended, and Johnson could not contest, are things

too foreign to our restless over-consciousness to be easily intelligible."

It is worth notice that Lord Chatham, in those strangely neglected letters to his nephew, Thomas Pitt, speaks of behaviour, carriage, "deportment," the graces, in the very accents of Chesterfield; and Chatham was no Chesterfield at heart. To such caricatures of exquisite breeding, as the Prince Regent in life or Sir John Chester in literature, we may apply Young's sentiment: "a *Half*-Chesterfield is quite a fool."

Two of Mr Dobson's remaining vignettes are pieces of reconstructive antiquarianism in his best manner: "A Day at Strawberry Hill" and "Old Vauxhall Gardens." Within the limits of a brief sketch, they could not be improved; all is there—happy quotation, dexterous allusion, positive knowledge: Georgian England revived in two characteristic scenes of public and of private life.

"In Cowper's Arbour" is a graceful portrait of the lighter, brighter Cowper: the "worldling" of Mr Birrell's recent essay. This is the Cowper whose letters show us the inveterate fish-eater; the jester with Newton, once of the slave trade, now of the Olney Hymns; the facetious and playful Cowper, all sprightliness and airs.

"I am jealous," writes Lamb to Coleridge, "of your fraternising with Bowles, when I think you relish him more than Burns, or my old favourite, Cowper. But you conciliate matters when you talk of the 'divine chit-chat' of the latter: by the expression, I see you thoroughly relish him."

That is the true Cowper: the Cowper who sat in his pleasant arbour polishing *John Gilpin* to perfection, and sending his verses over the way to Mr Wilson, the barber.

I have scarce left myself space to say anything about the three remaining papers: sympathetic "chit-chat" about

Stothard, "The Quaker of Art," about Bewick's Tailpieces and about the adventures of the young German, Pastor Moritz, in the England of 1782. For the first of these, one is especially grateful; as the happy possessor of that "old double-columned edition of the essayists," praised by Mr Dobson, I am vastly indebted to the graceful art of Stothard. He has suffered, also, by foolish comparisons with Blake. Upon Bewick Mr Dobson writes with authority, and further—what does not always accompany authority—with charm and ease. In particular, he well insists upon the moral force of the designs: their grimness of humour, sadness of tone, and perfect nicety of truth. The account of Pastor Moritz, a kind of German Partridge or Strap, is delightful enough; but it is a pity that the scene of the Oxford dons drinking and disputing at the Mitre, the gem of the book, was too long for quotation.

If we go through Golden Square, which is most living to us: Mr Matthew Bramble or Lord Bolingbroke, Mr Ralph Nickleby or Cardinal Wiseman? That is the sort of question prompted by this book; it is so full of the rich life of all literature and so full of actual life also. The books and the men of the past are as real, or as unreal, as each other; it is Mr Dobson's fortunate office to bring them out of the dust and ashes back to life. It is not a great book, a masterpiece of learning, of criticism, of history; but it is a masterpiece of cunning craftsmanship. To design and compose these Vignettes, with artful touches of love's labour, is no light thing; one must be something of a Goldsmith, something of a Lamb, to do it. Mr Dobson's verse is, indeed, of a finer quality: yet I find it hard to say, without foolish airs of enthusiasm, how good is this book of prose.

## THE HOLY COURT

*The Spirit of the Holy Court.* Written in French by NICOLAS CAUSSIN, S.J. Translated into English by Sir THOMAS HAWKINS, and reprinted from the edition of 1634 by CHARLES T. GATTY, Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. London: Simpkin, Marshall, & Co. (1898)

(*The Outlook*, London, 26th November 1898)

**H**ABENT *sua fata libelli!* And, though *The Holy Court* of the staunch Jesuit, Father Caussin, is anything but a *libellus*, being voluminous to excess, it has had its fate of wide fame followed by profound oblivion. From oblivion it has been saved by the piety and taste of Mr C. T. Gatty, who has made a golden anthology of its riches, chosen from the contemporary version of Sir Thomas Hawkins. Nicolas Caussin, S.J., and Thomas Hawkins, Kt., are two attractive figures in the fascinating seventeenth century. The French Jesuit was confessor to Louis XIII., victim of Cardinal Richelieu, a whimsical and great scholar, a divine of true unction and devotion. And Bayle was right in saying that, of all his works, *The Holy Court* is the "most honourable," even as its many translations into many tongues prove it the most admired in its own age. Well said the wits, upon Caussin's banishment from the Court of the Most Christian King, that he succeeded better in the Holy Court than in the Courts of princes. The English Knight, his translator, was of an ancient and very Catholic family in Kent; he was a close friend of Ben Jonson, a correspondent of Howell, and Anthony à Wood sings his praises. Lettered, leisured, an impassioned Papist, he found in the vast utterances of Caussin a fount of

spiritual and literary inspiration; and his version of *The Holy Court* is written in an English nobly beautiful and moving. Mr Shorthouse, who knows a good seventeenth-century thing when he sees it, has not disdained to convey certain passages from Hawkins into the pages of *John Inglesant*. But Caussin and Hawkins were very greatly of their own time and its tastes; their full, elaborate, spacious volumes are not for the hasty reader of our day. Mr Gatty has, with perfect tact and insight, sought out separable passages of characteristic beauty and charm from the version of 1634, arranging them judiciously in order. His little book of 170 pages should take a firm place among the treasures of all who love either "the beauty of holiness" or the beauty of fine prose. This little *Spirit of the Holy Court* is a thing of pure gold. Would that French priests and English squires to-day were more like Father Caussin and Sir Thomas Hawkins!

The original work is almost an "Whole Duty of Catholic Man," written with a singularly sustained fervour, not impaired by persistent illustrative excursions into ancient history, sacred and profane, nor by a profusion of appeal to authors of authority: "As *Cyprian* saith," or "As *Austin* hath it." But the good Caussin's French is none of the best: it has neither the measured splendours of Bossuet nor the restrained sweetness of Fénelon. An ardent, urgent preacher, Caussin writes with no care for academic sanctions; he scatters images, he abounds in rhetoric, which remind us of that trying work, the Bible, in any French version you please. But what French prose abhors is congenial to English, and in Hawkins's brave periods the audacities of Caussin seem native, natural, and at home. Hawkins had at his command those "solemn planetary wheelings" of which De Quincey speaks; stately harmonies of sentence, majestically musical, and of strong wing. Yet even more characteristic, may be, are certain brief sayings, veritable *pensées*, phrased with perfection of swift loveliness.

Thus: "The just are here below as little halcyons on the trembling of waters, or nightingales on thorns." Or thus: "To come into the world is to come upon a cross; to be man is to stretch out the hands and feet to be crucified." *The Holy Court*, as becomes its title, is full of such purely fair and touching utterances; no tiresome moral tritenesses, but common thoughts uncommonly realised, and therefore expressed with moving strangeness of beauty. Caussin clearly delighted, and Hawkins echoed his delight, in the visible wonder of the world: flowers, and the glory of sunlight, and crested waves are ever on their pages, and never with convention; there are no "nodding groves," nor "purling streams," nor "whisp'ring gales" for these men of the seventeenth century. They show an innocent candour of delight in Nature—*mirabilia opera Domini!* And their incessant moral applications, if sterner, are yet always somewhat in the sweet spirit of Izaak Walton upon nightingales: "Lord, what music hast Thou provided for the saints in heaven, if Thou affordest bad men such music on earth!" It is no poor imagination which describes the saints as "eagles in a storm, surcharged with sufferings, but made invincible with the arms of patience." The instruction of this book is stern; but how chivalrous, and—in true seventeenth-century meaning—"insolent"!

The little volume rings with proud challenges to the world, the flesh, the devil: it taunts them with their extreme futility, the utter penury of their gifts contrasted with their promises. I do not know, but I would wager that Michael Archangel was one of Caussin's patrons, and that Hawkins loved Saint George. The Church Militant and Triumphant dominates these pages: *Vexilla Regis prodeunt*. And a point of especial charm is their view of Christianity as a thing of warfare, glory, honour, chivalry: they do not whine, cringe, or beat the breast with humble ostentation. Caussin was at home in kings' houses; Hawkins was of ancient lineage and, most fatuous of phrases, a man of the

world. But author and translator "trod upon Plato's pride, with a greater": *The Holy Court* is not the work of saintly imbeciles. *Expertis credite!* cry original and translation. From their large experience of life, Caussin and Hawkins had learned the precise values of it: and their joint work—inexact but accurate description—is manly. They touch upon emperors and kings and captains of armies with an Imperial Christian touch; they reverence such potentates, they are no iconoclasts of earthly greatness; they are gentlemen of the early seventeenth century—but they owe a higher allegiance, pay a dearer homage, to powers more august. Caussin was a legitimate child of the knightly Loyola, his founder; Hawkins was a "Helbeck of Bannisdale," without that gentleman's hectic quality. *The Holy Court* is brave and chivalrous. Here, surely, is a gallant counsel: "Remember, our life is a music-book; seldom shall you find there many white notes together in the same line; black are mixed among them, and all together make an excellent harmony. God gives us a lesson in a little book which hath but two pages—the one is called consolation, the other desolation. It is fit for each of them to take its turn." Cromwellian Puritanism, with all its iron ecstasies, was often absurd and graceless: the Catholic Puritanism of the "Counter-Reformation" was severe, but beautiful and unlaughable; high-wrought, but never mad. Caussin and Hawkins are good company, courteous and debonair in the strictness of their faith: *The Holy Court* might be called full of a devout and excellent Euphuism. After all, to be "Saxon" and "homespun" is not the only virtue possible to religious literature in English; some of us do not hold Bunyan greater than Crashaw, or Baxter than Spenser.

"Unction," a rich and fragrant spirituality both natural and artistic, is now rare: our Christian writers seem afraid to dwell beautifully upon the beauty of holiness. But the seventeenth century, with its artistic passion, preferred to



err by excess of beauty, by prodigality in it, rather than to do without it. This sometimes led to obscurity, to the vice with which Corinna reproaches the youthful Pindar, of sowing "with the whole sack," not with the hand. It can hardly be charged against the English of Hawkins; he is absolutely lucid, of a musical clearness; a master of prose cadences, which compel the understanding. He never lumbers along in huddling sentences, nor loses his way in labyrinthine periods; clearly, he studied to write well and with distinction. Like Marcus Aurelius, he "drives at practice"; but beauty of style is one of his instruments. He loves to make a lingering melody of his words, to leave them in alluring order. "Behold you not in a garden bed how those poor tulips are shut up with melancholy under the shady coldness of the night?" A simple piece of imagery, leading up to a pious precept; but how perfect a piece of prose! *Non semper ingenii vena respondet ad votum*, says Seneca; Hawkins evidently knew that truth, and waited for the times of inspiration. There is not a careless sentence in Mr Gatty's extracts; each is pure and gracious English, many are unforgettable; amenity, joyousness, grace are upon them all, upon the most plangent as upon the most triumphant. This is one of the writers who give, not pleasure, but that higher thing, delight; no merely clever man could write so, but only one of a "courteous soul," in the full sense of Dante's address to Virgil. And what but this interior courtesy should mark a dealer with the "Holy Court"? We see him in his ancient Kentish home, busy with his books, with his letters to Ben Jonson and the London scholars; we see the gentleman of the Stuart time, cultured, refined, polite. But beneath that outer life we feel the hid passion of sanctity and care for things eternal; and when he betakes himself to Englishing the French priest's noble work, he does it with such rapture of reverence and devoted pains that the work becomes his own, and a native piece of lovely English literature.

## PASTIME PAPERS

BY HENRY EDWARD, CARDINAL MANNING

(*The Academy*, 16th September 1893)

IT is probable that this little book has come as a surprise to many. Those who had not the honour and joy of intimacy with the late Cardinal have been wont to see in him, his life and his work and his writings, something stiff and stern, a dogmatic severity, a lack of generous ease and sympathy and lightness. He stands in their memories, vested with the robes and ornaments of sacerdotal and episcopal authority: gaunt, austere, commanding, not quite human; priest and prelate and prince, infinitely dignified, but aloof from the world in his asceticism. They knew him to be cultured, a true son of academic Oxford, courtly and urbane, yet he had an air of exclusiveness and reserve which only his piety saved from seeming proud: a combination of Saint Thomas à Becket and Saint Charles Borromeo. It is an impression which Mr Hutton's careful biography does not do much to modify. Throughout that work Manning is a dictatorial dogmatist, delighting in rule and discipline, law and order, sentence and decree: not pleasantly pliant and malleable, not graciously flexible and versatile, but rigid and hard and grim. Compare, they will say, Manning's *Petri Privilegium* with Newman's *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*: see how magisterial is the one, how persuasive the other. This imagined Manning never unbends, never relaxes: a man to revere rather than to love.

But turn to Manning's friends: study the Manning of the Metaphysical Society, as drawn in Mr Wilfrid Ward's *Life of Dr Ward*, or the Manning of this book. He was far from worldly, in the most innocent sense of the word: far

less so than the secluded Newman. No man was ever wittier than Manning's brother-in-law, Bishop Wilberforce: no man less humorous. Manning had no wit, but a vast deal of humour. And it was his peculiar genius that, while he noted the way of the world with ready observation and dexterous look, marking its amusements, follies, sins, together with all that is great and good in it, he never laid aside his religious character, because in that was his life. Upon various sides of his nature he resembled both his friends, Lord Beaconsfield and Mr Gladstone: he was both subtle and sincere. Of late years he became more widely understood, through his attitude towards social questions. It was seen that, like the reigning Pope, his ascetic detachment from the world did not imply either lack of knowledge or lack of heart. Yet even so, the epigrammatic summaries of Manning's character pronounced him a man of imperious will and rigid temper: the "proud prelate," dear to melodramatic historians, just softened and subdued by the "sweet saint," dear to gushing hagiologists. He puzzled people: they knew his patriotism, his love for imperial England; they saw in him strong traces of the typical English cleric; but they did not get a complete and satisfactory view of him. There have been those who lauded Newman to the utmost, but who dared whisper rather loudly that there was a streak of the actor, the charlatan, about Manning: they never accused him of hypocrisy, but they spoke of something in his temperament not quite frank and open and ingenuous. His sincerity, piety, uprightness, were not called in question; but Roman officialism, Vatican policy, ultramontane excess, so we were told, found a congenial nature in Manning upon which to work. All the old foolish traditions about cunning Jesuitry, about the pious credulity and holy imbecility so pleasing to heaven, about Roman arrogance and Italian ignorance, about the bigotry of the seminaries, about modern Tridentine Catholicism, about modern hysterical

piety and agitated devotion, about the delusions or impostures of modern miracles : all these dreadful things were too much, men said, for the good Archdeacon of Chichester. Exulting with the fervour of a convert, he threw himself blindly into this unwholesome atmosphere, this Roman fever, and his mind was infected, his taste corrupted. For most men, behind Cardinal Newman lay a long, pathetic history, the struggles of a great soul : he represented the Oxford of days that have now the enchantment of romance. Behind Cardinal Manning most men saw no pathetic history, no glamour of romance : nothing but the wiles of Rome and the diplomacy of the Vatican. If controversialists thought that they detected historical error in Newman, they pointed it out with half-regret ; if in Manning, they talked confidently about unscrupulousness and the desperate straits of Roman theologians.

These parodies and travesties of the truth are now but little heard ; but it is profitable to consider them again. Primarily, they were the result of honest bewilderment, due to ignorance. Newman, by the compulsion of circumstances, took the world into his confidence : in prose and in verse he told the secrets of his soul. As the leader of a great movement, he became the fair prey or property of the public : the state of his mind in 1830 or in 1840 was a thing for literary discussion in 1860 ; no one could write upon the history of religious thought in the century without investigating his daily life, his early training, his Oxford career. Living away from the public view to extreme old age, he became a classic in his lifetime : men wrote of him as they might have written of Shelley and Byron ; they never saw him ; he took no part in public affairs ; London knew him not ; editors did not ask for his opinion on strikes, or temperance, or imperial federation ; he did not belong to the Metaphysical Society, nor attend Royal Academy dinners, nor was he a member of the Athenæum. But scholars, historians, theologians, critics knew the story of

his spiritual travels and adventures. All this was reversed in Manning's case : the world saw him and heard him. He was the indefatigable official, the untiring ruler of a great diocese, the unfailing friend of all philanthropic and national movements : he had relations with the world upon all sides, and was well in touch with his contemporaries. But the man himself remained unknown, save to his immediate friends ; no one could anywhere read the story of his soul. No poems, no sermons, no personal revelations, full of yearning and affection, and sorrow and faith, gave him a place in the hearts of strangers ; instead, they only knew a few hard, external facts, nothing intimate, nothing spiritual, nothing "psychological." And so, Manning was the energetic organiser, the man of practical policy, the ecclesiastic of administrative genius ; the world almost forgot the man in the archbishop. The world wrote and spoke of "John Henry" Newman with a tone of half-familiar admiration and love ; "Henry Edward" was but an official signature, not the name of a friend. Manning deliberately suppressed himself : he disliked and distrusted many things in modern life and thought, but nothing more than self-display, even of the harmless sort untainted by vanity. He relied absolutely upon the objective strength of the Faith, as guarded and taught by the living authority of the Church : he was careful to present the Faith, not as it was to himself in the recesses of his soul, but in the clear, strong, definite outlines common to all the faithful of all the ages. *Secretum meum mihi* : he never wore his heart upon his sleeve. Now and again, so great was his horror of any approach to egoism, he seemed, in outward manner, to repress his emotions, lest his words of counsel or of warning should be valued rather for his own sake than for that of his high office. And apart from all religious motives, he was by nature of an austere habit : he impressed his hearer as the greatest of great nobles, the finest of fine gentlemen, according to all the highest traditions of

courts and *salons*. Lord Chesterfield would have honoured a man so perfectly gracious, courteous, with that absolutely unforced distinction which is a fine art. But this refined bearing is always marked by a certain reticence and reserve : it is never profuse and lavish of itself. Newman, Hurrell Froude, Ward, one and all, were men of less natural and inevitable dignity : dignified, each in his own way, they were ; but their natures were more expansive and less discreet. Mr Pater writes of Fénelon, Archbishop of Cambrai :

“Certainly, it was worth while to have come so far only to see him and hear him give his pontifical blessing, in a voice feeble but of infinite sweetness, and with an inexpressibly graceful movement of the hands. A veritable *grand seigneur* ! His refined old age, the impress of genius and honours, even his disappointments, concur with natural graces to make him seem too distinguished (a fitter word fails me) for this world. *Omnia Vanitas* ! he seems to say, yet with a profound resignation which makes the things we are most of us so fondly occupied with seem petty enough.”

There is a touch of sentimental unction, in a good sense, about that : a not uncommon mark of the French hierarchy and priesthood. But though Manning had greater strength than appears in Mr Pater’s portrait of Fénelon, it well suggests that singular hieratic dignity, added as a last grace to a nature always dignified, which distinguished the late Cardinal.

Such a man is easily misinterpreted. His friends, his colleagues, his associates understood him : he was not careful to make the world understand. His public actions he would, if called upon, defend in the interests of the Church ; otherwise, with a kind of noble pride and humility in one, he let the insinuations, the misconstructions, the

malice, and the gossip go by. His writings, almost the whole of them, express this character : he had other things to think of than himself. He would write of "the Infallible Magisterium of the Supreme Pontiff," in a way that exasperated many. Newman, preaching and teaching the same doctrine, clothed it in all manner of persuasive graces : showed, in most winning manner, what it meant to him, his own apprehension of it ; explained how he had considered it at different periods of his life. The result was not always conviction on the part of his readers, but always a fresh submission to the golden words, the magical charm of Newman. *Cor ad cor loquitur*, heart to heart speaketh, was Newman's motto and Newman's method. Manning, by an instinct equally gracious, hid himself away from his readers, and did but lend his voice to the living Church. "I am of Paul, I of Apollos," was hateful to him, and he refused to run the risk. At the same time, a man and his style are inseparable : and Manning wrote always with a certain stately beauty, a grave and chastened simplicity, measured and academic. But he had no modern ingenuities. In these days, Addison and the great Augustan writers seem deplorably uningenious : they never tortured a thought into contortions ; they were simple and unashamed. Manning was no more afraid of a truism than Sophocles or Horace : truisms are probably the truest truths, the best attested in the world. But the word indicates our longing for some new thing ; and he who will invert a truism into a paradox passes for the happiest and most refreshing of wits. A magazine article by Manning, with the latest clevernesses on either side of it, had an old-world air : he wrote not as the scribes.

Now, by the devotion of a loyal editor, we have a little volume of essays. Had they been published ten years ago, the public would have understood Manning somewhat better. For they are not controversial, nor dogmatic, nor theological, nor historical : they are moral, social, ironical,

secular. Thackeray might have written them, using the precision of Aristotle and the brevity of Bacon. They deal with such matters as Honour, Consistency, Courage, Pride, Vanity, Popularity, Selfishness, Gossip; they touch upon Journalism and Criticism; they conclude with a dissertation upon the Dæmon of Socrates. They show the writer treating of these things with a light hand, a shrewd head, and a full heart. For the most part he is examining society, social standards and ideals, with equal humour and seriousness, according as folly and merriment, or wickedness and sorrow, are the dominant topics. They are at least masterpieces of the *lucidus ordo*: each little sketch is complete, methodical, systematic. Bacon tells us that revenge is "a wild kind of justice"; it is much in that manner that the Cardinal searches out the origin, nature, moral affinity of each social fault or characteristic. It is done with no heavy scholastic implements, yet in the scholastic spirit: the logic of moral theologians underlies the satire, and the irony, and the scorn. The reader cannot but see that Manning had a supreme satisfaction and delight in the whole teaching of his Church, in its Aristotelian inheritance, in all its traditional ways and aspects. Usually, upon taking up a modern book or article, I find my author begin by saying white, proceed to say black, and end in saying grey. There is a generous air of seeing all sides of the case in this bewildering style; but it only means that my author has not seen his subject steadily, nor seen it whole. Skepticism, so spelled, may be a most sacred thing; but it sometimes produces a most maddening and mystifying style. My author may preach to me the doctrines in religion, philosophy, politics, art, that I most abhor; but if he will do it methodically and coherently, I will be grateful. Aristotle and his ethics are not the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; but their manner is magnificent and immortal. Manning allowed nothing to lie outside the reach and range of his



principles: the smallest silly fashion, the most trifling social pretence, is traced by him to his radical home in the conscience and will. You may resent and dislike his principles, but you confess he has a view of life, intelligible if unacceptable. Dante, perhaps Manning's favourite poet, wrote so; Aquinas wrote so, as Mr Patmore has reminded us; the Mystics, whose very name stands, with some, for confused obscurity, wrote so. "Grandeur of ideas," said Blake, "is founded upon precision of ideas"; it was the constant principle of his life and work. A vast and vague sublimity is possible to the dreamer, but never to the artist; and it is profitable to remember the influence of numbers and ideas of numerical relations upon Greek thought, metaphysical and æsthetic.

Dissimilar in so many things, the two Cardinals were alike in this, that neither of them wrote for pleasure. Newman, in a letter to Ward, describes the physical pain of writing, which he felt to such a degree, that "I have hardly written anything unless I was *called* to do so." Almost the whole of their volumes, some seventy in number, were undertaken as a duty. The present volume is, indeed, the fruit of Manning's rare leisure; and even these *Pastime Papers* "drive at practice," and have a moral bearing. In the excellent introduction by "J. O.," Manning is happily portrayed in just those touches which make portraits live. I have quoted neither from this, nor from the essays. The whole book is too delightful, too much of a single piece, to allow of very effective or fair quotation. I have preferred to dwell upon its writer; it is as useful as it is uncommon to be able to dwell upon a man thus at unity with himself:

"Whose faith and work were bells of full accord."

# THE RELIGION OF A LITERARY MAN

BY RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

(*The Academy*, 2nd December 1893)

NOTHING would be easier than to receive this book with violence, either of praise or blame: it is an excellently honest book, and has all the perilous qualities of perfect honesty. Mr Le Gallienne is honest enough to set down his very personal thoughts about life and death, which are certainties for all; and about the mysteries beyond and beneath, before and behind them, which are for all uncertainties, but of a very various uncertainty for various men. He has done it simply and sincerely, without fear of diverse assailants. I can scarce conceive the man who will accept the whole book, who will not be distressed, amused, or angered somewhere in the course of his perusal. Here is a "Literary Man" expounding his "Religion"; and he contrives to do it, literary and religious though undoubtedly he is, without arguments or appeals, metaphysical, historical, or theological. His method is a mingling of mysticism unmethodical with "sanctified common-sense": were a Catholic or a Calvinist to argue with him, he would answer *their* mysticism by his common-sense, and *their* common-sense by his mysticism. Clearly, he is invulnerable; but the Catholic or the Calvinist would take this pleasant strategy with good humour, strong in the knowledge that Mr Le Gallienne, like many another literary man of eminent charm, is averse from the dogmatic, the scholastic and, shall I say, the severely logical. Out of his meditations, not wholly æsthetic and poetical, in the cant sense of the words, he has extracted a number of wholesome and inspiring truths, many engaging fancies, some less engaging flippancies, but no matter of necessary

offence. And he has given them to us in the best prose that he has yet written; best in its sustained and equal excellence throughout.

The one difficulty, for a not entirely contemptible class of readers, is a question of language. What is "religion"? If "Christianity" be true, can there be in it anything not "essential"? and a score more of like questions. What Mr Le Gallienne has written composes a set of convictions to be respected; but were the English language alone at stake we should protest against his phraseology. To quote an eminent Unitarian and an eminent Agnostic: Dr Martineau writes:

"A God that is merely nature, a theism without God, a religion forfeited only by the *nil admirari*, can never reconcile the secular and the devout, the pagan and the Christian mind. You vainly propose an *Εἰρηνικὸν* by corruption of a word."

Mr Leslie Stephen writes upon the Divinity of Christ:

"Unsectarian Christianity consists in shirking the difficulty without meeting it, and trying hard to believe that the passion can survive without its essential basis. It proclaims the love of Christ as our motive, while it declines to make up its mind whether Christ was God or man, or endeavours to escape a categorical answer under a cloud of unsubstantial rhetoric. But the difference between man and God is infinite; and no effusion of superlatives will disguise the plain fact from honest minds. To be a Christian in any real sense, you must start from a dogma of the most tremendous kind, and an undogmatic creed is as senseless as a statue without shape or a picture without colour. Unsectarian means unchristian."

Carlyle, again, was once used to laugh at the Athanasian controversy, at *Homousion* and *Homoiousion* dividing the

Christian world: in later years, "he perceived Christianity itself to have been at stake. If the Arians had won, it would have dwindled away into a legend." It is confusion of words to speak, as Cardinal Newman puts it, of "faith," and explain it to mean "the faith of Marcus Antoninus, St Austin, and Peter the Hermit, of Luther, Rousseau, Washington, and Napoleon Bonaparte." This is the amiable, but worthless principle of

"frittering away the meaning of definite terms till they are available for anything, or adopting a neutral term which, by a little management and stretching, will include opposites. . . . A term is gradually stripped of the associations which make it what it is, it is 'defecated to a pure transparency,' and then it is ready for use."

What Mr Le Gallienne describes as "essential Christianity" is often admirable morality and fine sentiment: a man will go well through life, acting up to it; but it is just as much, and just as little, "essential Christianity" as it is essential Buddhism or essential Devil-worship. Fielding's Parson Thwackum was not wholly judicious in his definitions: "When I mention religion, I mean the Christian religion; and not only the Christian religion, but the Protestant religion; and not only the Protestant religion, but the Church of England": yet his method is less hazy than that of Mr Le Gallienne, who is rather a disciple of the Parson's antagonist, Philosopher Square. Passing over the historical fact that Christians of all kinds and nations have lived and suffered and died in the strength of their dogmatic creeds, their faith in an incarnate God, we may ask whether the apostles and evangelists, the witnesses and recorders of Christ, give us no testimony worth considering, yet intensely "theological." And Mr Le Gallienne tells us:

"It is no longer necessary for us to dispute painfully concerning documents. All such matters *the German*

*commentators and M. Renan* have already settled for us and faith has really nothing either to hope or fear from the discovery of any number of gospels. In short, we have accomplished the inestimable separation between theology and religion. Our religion no longer stands or falls by the Hebrew Bible."

Upon the words italicised—not by Mr Le Gallienne—it is unnecessary to speak : *φωνάντα συνετοῖσιν*. As well might one seriously criticise the remark that all social questions have been settled for us by the French Revolutionists and Shelley. As to the "blessed divorce" between theology and religion, Mr Le Gallienne uses freely the term "God"; he preaches the "love of God": we cannot love abstractions nor emotions personified, and Mr Le Gallienne clearly uses the term in some theistic sense. But in doing so he is, to that extent, a theologian; for the most part he is, indeed, no theologian. Newman writes that by theology he does not mean

"a series of pious or polemical remarks upon the physical world viewed religiously, nor yet 'the Evidences of Religion,' nor yet that vague thing called 'Christianity,' or 'Our Common Christianity,' or 'Christianity the law of the land,' if there is any man alive who can tell me what it is. I discard it, for the very reason that it cannot throw itself into a proposition."

For, as he said long before becoming a Catholic, "Christianity is faith; faith implies a doctrine; a doctrine, propositions; propositions, yes or no; yes or no, differences." The "essence" of Christianity is not any "morality" taught by Christ, with some infinitely gracious and loving authority: not a sentence of the Lord's Prayer but is older than Christ's human life on earth: scarce a precept in the Sermon on the Mount but may be paralleled from earlier teachers of the East. The "essence" of Christianity lay in the

revelation of a Divine personality entering into new relations with men : in the faith that this man was not god-like, nor demigod, nor divinely inspired, but God. That very definite "theological" faith has been the essential strength of Christianity, from the death of Saint Stephen to the death of Father Damien : it has been no vaguely realised subtilty of the schools, but a living reality. Take that away and you will be left with a precarious theism and a morality quickened by theism ; but Christianity will be gone. Whatever be the basis of morality, whether we follow Kant, or Mr Spencer, or another, no "theologian" has yet found it in Christianity, which teaches the highest morality yet taught, but does not claim, in its most primitive historical form, to have discovered the "categorical imperative" or first revealed the conscience.

"Whether 'twere best opine Christ was,  
Or never was at all, or whether  
He was and was not, both together,—  
It matters little for the name,  
So the idea be still the same."

That "essential" view of Christ was held by Browning's professor in "Christmas Eve" ; it failed to satisfy Browning, who held, as Mr Swinburne says of him, "with a force of personal passion the radical tenet of the Christian faith—faith in Christ as God—a tough, hard, vital faith, that can bear at need hard stress of weather and hard thought." It was not the view of Napoleon, with his famous, "General, I am a judge of men, and tell you that Christ is not a man . . . if you do not understand that Christ is God, why then I was wrong in making you a General." Coleridge also, starting with Unitarianism, ends his life of thought in "No Christ, no God ; no Trinity, no God" : and he saw clearly the truth of *aut Deus aut non bonnis*. "If Christ was merely a man, he could not have been even a good man. There is no medium." If this "theology" of the Incarnation be included by Mr Le Gallienne among his early

"perversions" and "ingenuities," his hard "intellectual statements," he might at least offer an explanation of the way in which the whole worship of the early Church, as in Pliny's days, and the whole spirit of martyrdom, were bound up with this "opaque dogma." His book is distinctly marred by a "popular" superficiality of treatment, when he touches, not with the least irreverence, yet with an easy assurance, upon questions which have imposed upon many men years of spiritual agony and mental labour.

"Je n'arrivais pas au point d'émancipation," said Renan, "que le gamin de Paris atteint sans aucun effort de réflexion, qu'après avoir traversé Gesenius et toute l'exégèse allemande. Il me fallait dix années de méditation et du travail forcené, pour voir que mes maîtres n'étaient pas infaillibles."

But Mr Le Gallienne's main contention is grounded upon the view that churches and theologians have been stout guardians of ecclesiastical powers and of dogmatic formulæ, but have notoriously failed, or frequently failed, or have an irresistible tendency to fail, in preaching gentleness, charity, brotherliness; he proceeds, or apparently proceeds, to insist that the claims of such churches and the doctrines of such theologians, being of less importance than the homely, human virtues, should be ignored. It is not clear whether he means that they should be relegated to the background, like Epicurean gods, or positively rejected and denied. He denies their connection with "essential" Christianity: it may be that he allows them to rank with "unessentials." Certainly, he maintains that "the world has never tried the Gospel of Christ." We are told, somewhat *ex cathedra*, that "it is only Christ's moral precepts that are to be taken literally . . . all the rest is parable"—a notable dogma of private judgment. If Mr Le Gallienne is to be taken literally, he is a follower of Count Tolstoi: he will not go to law, he will give his cloak to the taker of

his coat. Probably Mr Le Gallienne does not mean this verbal adherence to the letter; it would be hard for him to justify so rigid a position. He means us to believe that the great commandments of love and charity have never been obeyed, through the fault of ecclesiastics "unspiritually minded, as the majority of ecclesiastics must be." It is a paradox, scarcely charitable and certainly unhistorical; the world knows well the triumphs of Christian ideas, the purification of life, the vindication of man's rights, the assertion of woman's dignity, the denunciations of slavery. In the language of the Catholic Church, four sins "cry to heaven for vengeance": one is the defrauding the labourer of his wages. "Organised Christianity has probably done more to retard the ideals that were its Founder's than any other agency in the world." It is a strange reading of history which so upbraids the one protector of the weak and champion of the oppressed in ages of strong lawlessness. When accusations are brought against "organised Christianity" of cruelty and wrong, the accusers, in their just zeal, forget the words "not peace, but a sword": words which do not justify violence and pride, but which show us the Founder of Christianity prophesying them. Where, again, does Mr Le Gallienne learn that original Christianity was "a sweeping crusade against dogmas and formulæ"? Rather, "these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone": "I come not to destroy the law, but to fulfil": "if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." It seems almost impossible to read the Gospels and not to see that the future of Christianity is throughout depicted as one of antagonism, up to the end, between the spirit of the world and the spirit of truth: an antagonism in which even "the very elect" shall be in danger of falling away, and there shall be little "faith on the earth," at last. But it is useless to criticise an arbitrary system of interpretation, which accepts and rejects upon a principle purely subjective. Rather, we



are forced to wonder that anyone should think it worth his while to claim the term "Christian" for his own who believes that the very companions of Christ were, from first to last, unable to understand Him; while still our whole knowledge of Christ rests upon the testimony transmitted by them to their successors. If that be indeed so, whatever date we assign to whatever scriptures, the literary and religious problem is insoluble: men under hallucinations and misconceptions, as Père Didon observes, do not conquer the world with them.

The utterances of this book are in praise of high feeling, of courageous bearing, of good fellowship:

"Erfüll' davon dein Herz, so gross es ist,  
Und wenn du ganz in dem Gefühle selig bist,  
Nenn' es dann, wie du willst,  
Nenn's Glück! Herz! Liebe! Gott!  
Ich habe keinen Namen  
Dafür! Gefühl ist Alles;  
Name ist Schall und Rauch,  
Umnebelnd Himmelsgluth."

True enough,

"Wenn man's so hort, mocht's leidlich scheinen,  
Steht aber doch immer schief darum."

The next line may be left unapplied. The sentiment of the book is cheering and exhilarating: here is no foolish "religion of art," no unworthy pessimism, no grandiloquence about anything. But there is an incurable sentimentality, not of the gushing and wordy sort, but somehow inherent in the very strength of the writer, an intrusion of fancies into the place of thoughts. Thus Mr Le Gallienne assures us that, whether there be a life to come, or no, "it does not really much matter." In another place, in pleasant allusion to Sir Thomas Browne, we read that

"there are few of us . . . who do not sometimes,  
when the world is budding and shooting in the spring,

pray softly in our own way for the souls of those beloved who are no longer with us in the sun and the sweet air."

Mr Le Gallienne dare not trifle and sport with the sorrow and the wistfulness of death ; but a pretty sentiment is too much for him. Whether our mother, wife, or child be dead for ever, and eternally lost to us, "does not really much matter" to them or to us : but when we feel prettily sentimental, we may be moved by the hawthorn buds, and the daisies, to "pray softly in our own way" for their souls. This is not a satisfactory substitute for even "conventional Christianity." Indeed, much of Mr Le Gallienne's pleasant language is an ingenious evasion, self-deception, method of illusion. Thus, he assails the common notions of individuality, personality, and maintains that if we meet new friends, with the qualities dear to us in old friends dead, then "we have not to wait to meet our old friends again in heaven, we meet them again already on earth—in the new ones." Anything less true to, at the least, my own experience, I cannot conceive, nor anything more cynically heartless, did Mr Le Gallienne really mean it. It is but a bold and ingenious way of not facing the reality of death : just as to plead our ignorance of the degree and way in which others suffer pain and sorrow, is but an escape from the haunting reality of the world's unhappiness. So anxious seems Mr Le Gallienne, with a praiseworthy instinct and desire, to show how rare a world it is, that he is something too apt to "whistle, as he goes, for want of thought." *Omnia exeunt in mysterium* ; that theological commonplace is a better reply to "the riddle of the painful earth," than a gay minimising of the darkness. It is in a happier vein that Mr Le Gallienne practically tackles the "problem of pain" by telling the age a salutary home-truth, that it is exceeding cowardly. A valiant and valuable reply !

One habit of the writer is a little provoking : his serene

assumption that all the world, or at least all the "spiritualists" in it, are of his mind about the gravest and most solemn questions. "We" know, in these enlightened days, how to take Inspiration, Miracles, the Trinity: "we," the heirs of all the ages. "I" would be at once more modest and more true: there is no arrogance in saying that "I" am forced, for such and such reasons, to take certain views of sundry matters: the book is a confession. But to assume that other views are unworthy of the least recognition, and are held, in fact, by no one not behind the spirit of the times, is a little arrogant and very misleading. Also, Mr Le Gallienne, with excellent intentions, takes a rosier view of modern tendencies than actual experience can confirm. Thus, he praises the "Relative Spirit," justly indeed, though the Relative Spirit was mischievous enough when applied by the Sophists of Greece to the study of ethics.

"Before the breath of that genial spirit," writes Mr Le Gallienne, "the icy conventions and prejudices of mankind melt away as frost in the sun, and the liberated souls of men and women laugh and are glad in the joyous developments of their natures as God made them."

But the application of the Relative Spirit to that "icy convention," the sanctity of marriage, has resulted in the "joyous development," in many countries, of certain statistics nothing else than appalling. Indeed, the book suffers from a certain indecision of manner: now we have some graceful disquisitions, a little in the manner of Mr Stevenson, and presently an essay in stricter reasoning, pursued for awhile, and broken off in a whimsical flourish, with an airy caprice. It is as though triolets and villanelles were interpolated into Euclid and the Thirty-nine Articles. A difficulty is stated, an answer is suggested; we are intent upon the matter, and suddenly we are whisked away upon the tail of an epigram into the next paragraph and a

new theme. Recast into that perilous form, a "sonnet sequence," the book would be a more perfect whole; the hinting method of poetry will not do for prose, if the prose is to state a plain argument.

Mr Le Gallienne's attitude towards theology is in part explained by the words :

"One has been . . . brought up to regard religion as something supernatural imposed upon our human nature, rather than something blossoming out of it. . . . Religion, we are accustomed to think, is an accomplishment taught in schools like algebra, an 'optional' subject indeed, and we may, if we will, learn drawing instead."

Here, at least, Mr Le Gallienne should drop the plural, and speak for himself; for that is not a universal experience. In such a case, religion and its science, theology, are thrust upon the learner forcibly, foolishly, as classics or mathematics may be indiscreetly thrust upon young scholars, and crammed into unwilling brains. Theology, unvitalised and unrealised, may be true theology, but it is untruly communicated. But as well might one deny the beauty of poetry, if poetry be prosaically imposed upon us, as deny the living truth of theology, for the deadening manner of its communication. It is not too much to say that all theology, including "the arbitrary dogma of the Immaculate Conception," flows from within, from the first utterance of conscience; it is all implicit there, and "external" evidence does but confirm and verify our anticipations. In the vast riches of Catholic theology there is nothing, not the most dryly technical of propositions, but is alive, and can appeal to the emotions and affections. It is, after all, a shallow and hasty thought, that to most Christians of dogmatic communions their theologies and creeds are dreary and unreal things: only inexperience of a dogmatic religion, taken to heart and soul, could affirm it. Again, so far as the

book betrays any metaphysical reading, it is reading of Mr Spencer, whose "experience and utility" theories are hard to reconcile with Mr Le Gallienne's excursions into mysticism, while they amply explain his attitude towards a reasoned theology, the science of the truths of God. Hence his delicate dancing round the questions of sin and free will, responsibility and obligation.

I have seldom met with a book from which I differed so widely, while admiring and enjoying it so greatly. It stoutly sets its face against pestilent modern affectations of artistic licence and personal licentiousness, against the claim to be "unmoral" and the pretence of being *blasé*: it appeals to sane emotions, to natural wonder and pity and humility and humour. There is a frank zest and lust of life in it, the better spirit of Whitman: it is always reverent in intention, and the writer cannot have realised how certain phrases would jar upon certain readers. For all the flaws that may be thought discoverable in it, it is no foolish book to throw aside: it expresses a tendency of belief and thought, of which the "essentials," though held by not a few, have rarely of late found expression so pleasing. Said David Balfour to Alan Breck, "Alan, I'll not say it's the good Christianity as I understand it, but it's good enough." Compared with the graceless gospels of suicide and dyspepsia, so glibly offered for our acceptance just now, Mr Le Gallienne's religion is "good enough": at least it is a gospel of faith, hopeful and unashamed. For frequent reading, I shall continue to prefer the "Religion" of another "Literary Man": those Confessions of Saint Augustine, which tell how he passed from an airy and elegant rhetoric into "conventional Christianity," and even became a "dogmatic theologian" of the first order: a progress, so far at least as the first part, made by countless others, under his guidance and illumination. But if the "Kingdom of the Spirit" is to come—(it was, surely, not "Joachim de Lyra," but Joachim of Flora, who made the famous prophecy)—

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heretical, as it will be, it will yet be less distressful than the ashen kingdom of despair and death prophesied by the professional mourners of literature. Let us thank Mr Le Gallienne for his book, and counsel him, in all good-will, before issuing a second edition, to study that forgotten but memorable work, *The Eclipse of Faith*.

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